NEWS EXCLUSIVE

"WE COULD SEE WATER COMPANY BOSSES IN JAIL"

Angling Times

June 3, 2025 - £2.99

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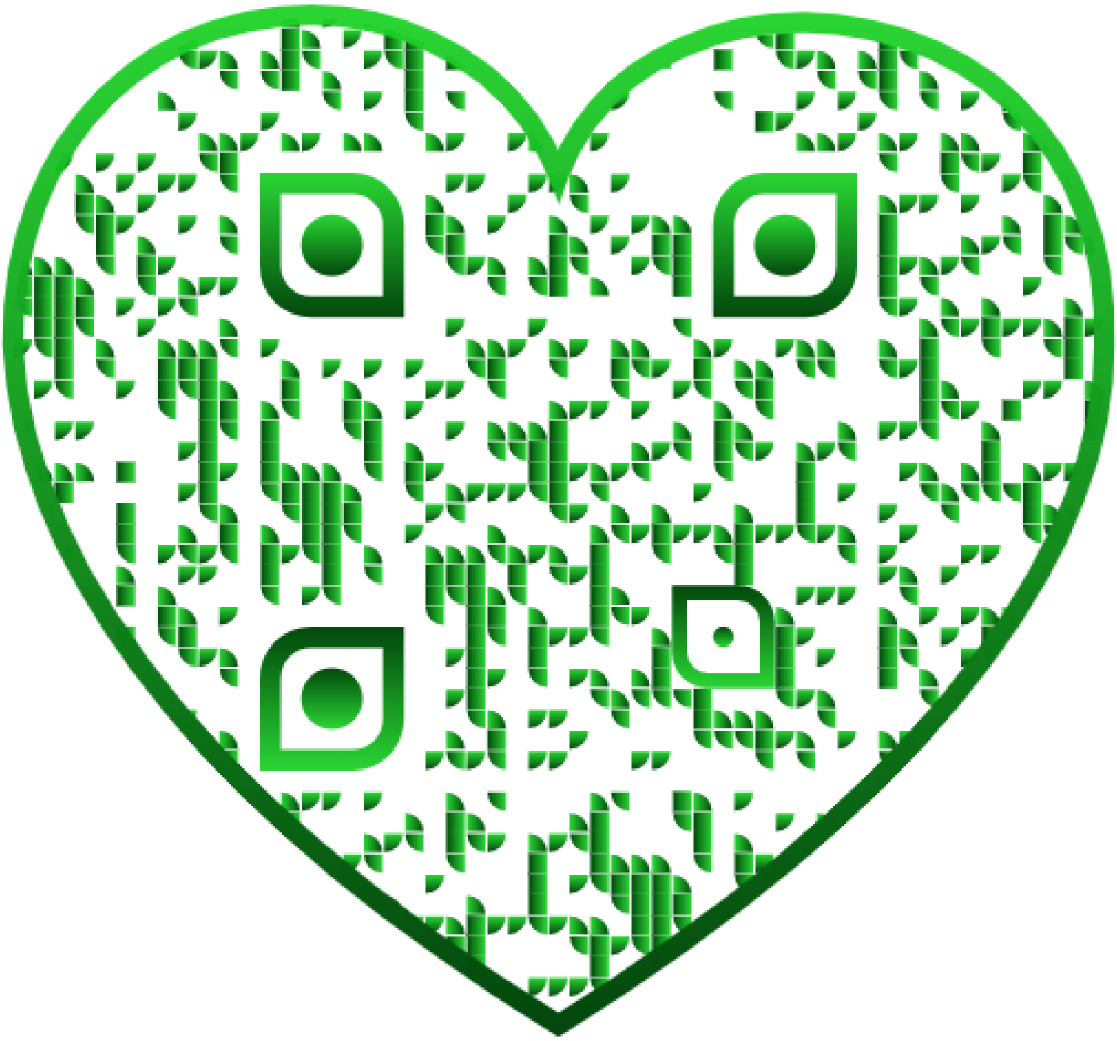

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AnglingTimes JUNE 3, 2025

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SKY-HIGH PRICES ARE A HUGE WORRY

I POPPED down to the local tackle shop in my lunch hour the other day and, in the short time I was there, several hundred pounds passed over the counter.

Obviously it's great to see an independent tackle shop doing well. But it did make me wonder about what the long-term impact of the ever-rising cost of tackle and bait will be.

I can't help but feel that it could end up pricing people out of going fishing as often as they'd like.

I know pretty much everything in life has gone up in price, and it's by no means an angling-specific problem but, when buying what were traditionally cheaper baits, such as groundbait and pellets, becomes a serious investment, I do fear for the future.

You can easily picture a situation where angling becomes a pastime that people can only do once a month, or even less, as an occasional treat, rather than something they can justify doing weekly.

And while we constantly talk about how we must encourage more youngsters into the sport, one of the biggest obstacles parents of budding junior anglers must face is simply the price, not only of getting them up and running, but of then keeping them topped up with bait and other essential tackle items.

Then, of course, there are day-ticket prices to consider. I've just booked a couple of 24-hour tickets at a local carp complex to take my son for his first night fishing session. I reckon if I totted up everything needed for the trip I wouldn't be seeing much change from £150.

I wish I had some magical solution to make angling more affordable but, with manufacturing and shipping costs rising and businesses needing to make a living, I'm not sure what the answer is.

Or even if there is one...

James Furness
Editor

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THIS WEEK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THE WORLD OF FISHING

AnglingTimes
DRENNAN CUP
CATCHES OF THE WEEK
2025 - 2026 SEASON

PERSONAL BESTS TUMBLE AT TENCH CHAMPIONSHIPS!

Latest event goes down a storm as big fish are landed across the board

Mike Simpson's 10lb 15oz PB. The smile says it all!

TENCH angling enthusiasts from across the country recently gathered for a 'festival' to celebrate all things great about the iconic spring species at this year's National Tench Championships.

Organised by the Tenchfishers, the friendly competition takes place annually, in which fans of the species compete for top prizes while spending a weekend on the bank in the company of like-minded individuals.

Dean Bradshaw took this 'nine' on the float.

Held at Oxfordshire's Linear Fisheries on Oxlease Lake, this year's event was heralded a huge success, and plenty of tench were caught, capped by a magnificent fish weighing 10lb 15oz for winning angler, Mike Simpson.

"Conditions were challenging at times, but between the 33 anglers, 23 tench were banked in total, spread right across the lake," said Tenchfishers secretary, Ben Kennedy.

"The lake's carp were feeding eagerly ahead of spawning too, and more than 50 were landed over the weekend.

"The biggest of these weighed 40lb 2oz, landed by Mark Churchill on 1.75lb test curve rods and a size 10 hook!" Ben added.

The title goes to the angler who catches the most tench, not the biggest total weight, and Mike Simpson's four fish, including a near-11lb new personal best, catapulted him up the leaderboard on the final morning.

"I went into Sunday with a

Scott's impressive bream, just 12oz off the record!

RECORD-SHAKING BREAM FOR CARPER!

SCOTT Crowhurst had an almighty shock when this colossal 21lb 15oz bream surfaced on the end of his line during a recent session.

The Essex-based angler was fishing his local day-ticket lake at The Mill Carp Fishery when he hooked the specimen on a pop-up boilie intended for carp.

It's just 12oz off Scot Crook's 22lb 11oz current British Record bream, caught from Cambridgeshire's Ferry

THE RESULTS

1ST
Mike Simpson
Four tench,
32lb 14oz

2ND
Jamie Cuzen
Three tench,
22lb 10oz

3RD
Malc Hough
Two tench, 15lb 10oz

4TH
Coops Cooperson
Two tench, 15lb 1oz

5TH
Adam Thomas
Two tench,
13lb 13oz

6TH
Tony Montague
Two tench, 10lb 6oz

Tackle Box
GARDNER
2025
Winner

Unique trophies and great prizes were awarded.

single tench of 7lb 14oz to my name, but a hectic couple of hours followed, in which I landed three more fish of 5lb 11oz, 8lb 4oz, plus my PB," Mike told us.

"The big one fell to a small cube of bacon grill, hair-rigged and presented over a baited area 42 yards out. That fish sealed not only the individual championship, but the Specimen Tench award too!"

Other highlights included Daniel Wilding's fish of 10lb exactly, also a new PB, as well as Dean Bradshaw's float-caught 9lb 4oz female.

"I chose to go all-out on the float, fishing a waggler at close range over balls of groundbait, corn, chopped worm and red maggots," a delighted Dean told us.

Lagoon back in 2012.

"I'd been out on three occasions this year and blanked each time, but this session got off to a better start, as I'd landed carp of 19lb and 16lb that morning," Scott told us.

"Things went quiet for a while after that, then, at 1pm I had another take.

"I lifted into a fish that didn't fight much but felt heavy, and initially I thought it might be a grass carp, as I knew there were a few living in there."

As the fish neared the net, Scott expected to see the long and slim shape of a 'grassie' surface – but he was flabbergasted when the deep-bodied bream appeared instead.

"I thought the record was around 24lb but, as it happens, I'm glad my fish wasn't 13oz heavier. I was the only person on the lake so would've had nobody there to witness it!", Scott joked.

Scenes like this have no place on our banks.

ASSAILANTS OF EA BAILIFFS FINED £12K

A FATHER and son who assaulted two Environment Agency (EA) bailiffs are to pay fines and costs totalling more than £12,000.

The fines were imposed on Andrew and Sidney Bowman by Telford Magistrate's Court on April 25 this year, following a shocking incident at Shropshire's Pool Hall Fishery in autumn 2023.

The pair were approached by the bailiffs and found to be fishing without rod licences. Andrew refused to give his details and urged his father to do the same.

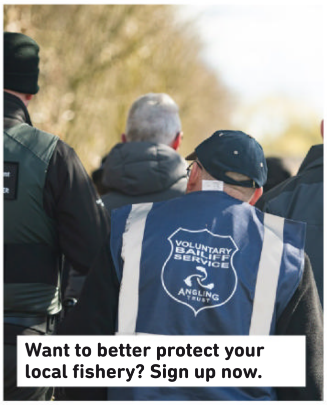
When cautioned by the EA officers, who said they were removing his fishing tackle, Andrew struck one of them in the face.

Sidney then assaulted an officer, and the incident ended with the police in attendance at the scene.

BRUSH UP ON YOUR ENFORCEMENT SKILLS

A NEW programme has been launched that club officials and anglers can access to refresh their fisheries enforcement skills, entirely free of charge.

Created by the Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service (FESS), FishNET is an online learning system covering seven modules, and is ideal for anyone new to, or already involved in, any aspects of fisheries enforcement.



Want to better protect your local fishery? Sign up now.

"This will revolutionise the way we deliver educational material," said Joel Virgo, FESS communications manager.

"It will cover topics including fisheries law, best practices, prevention strategies and invasive non-native species.

"It is perfect for anyone involved with or interested in fisheries enforcement, from the individual angler to club bailiffs and rural police teams.

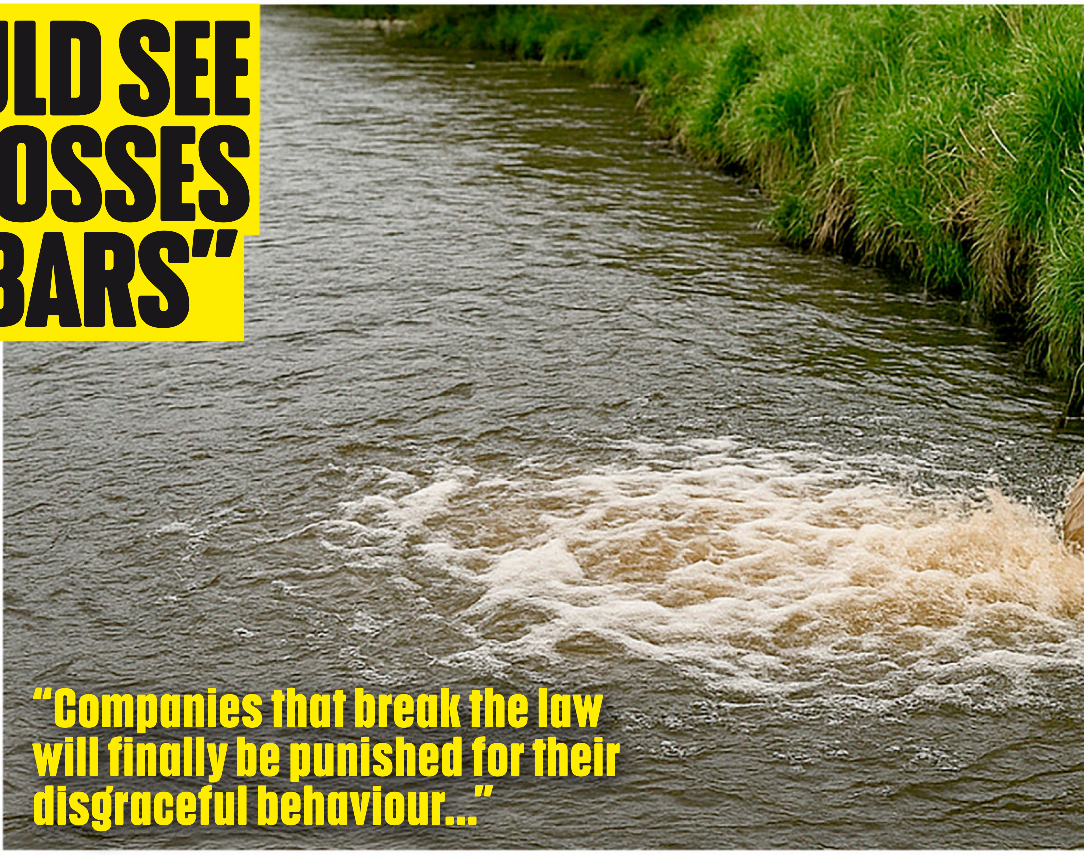
"There are free places available over the next 12 months on a first come, first served basis."

● To register, please visit: www.anglingtrust.net/fishnet-learning-hub

NEWS EXCLUSIVE

"WE COULD SEE WATER BOSSES BEHIND BARS"

Record number of investigations launched into utility companies, with huge fines and jail time on the cards



"Companies that break the law will finally be punished for their disgraceful behaviour..."

A TOTAL of 81 criminal investigations have been launched into polluting water companies as a crackdown against the biggest offenders finally gathers momentum.

The figures represent a rise of 145% since July last year and, according to the government, the increase is a result of their 'Plan for Change', spearheaded by Environment Secretary Steve Reed. Since the plan was launched last year the number of inspections into sewage pollution incidents has surged by nearly 400%

The new figures bring hope to the angling community, as well as other clean-water campaigners, that headway is finally being made and that the polluters will ultimately be fully held to account.

The consequences for any utility found guilty are severe, with bosses facing up to five years in jail, and companies facing fines of hundreds of millions of pounds.

'JUST THE BEGINNING'

In an impassioned statement, Steve Reed emphasised that a far firmer stance will be taken with polluters going forward.

"Water companies have too often gone unpunished as they pump record levels of sewage into our waterways. No more," he said.

"A record number of criminal investigations have been launched into law-breaking water companies, which could see those at the helm put behind bars. Water companies that break the law will finally be punished for their disgraceful behaviour so we can clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good."

The Environment Agency (EA) is at the helm of the new drive and are currently carrying out their largest-ever inquiry into potential widespread non-compliance at over 2,000 sewage works.

Steve Reed (second from right) said water companies will go unpunished 'no more'.

Under new powers, delivered by the 2025 Water Act, water executives who cover up illegal sewage spills can be jailed for up to two years.

"The figures are testament to our determination to hold companies to account and achieve a cleaner water environment," said EA Chief Executive, Philip Duffy.

"Our message to the industry is clear: we expect full compliance throughout the water system, and we will not hesitate to take robust enforcement action where we identify serious breaches."

With an additional 380 regulatory staff recently having been hired by the EA to carry out inspections and other enforcement activities, Duffy said that the EA would not be resting on its laurels after a positive start.

"This is just the beginning," he confirmed. "We are on track to deliver 10,000 inspections next year, using our tougher powers gained through the Water Act, alongside more officers and upgraded digital tools to drive better performance across the water sector."

'MEANINGFUL RESULTS' NEEDED

Jamie Cook, CEO of the Angling Trust, welcomed the new figures relseased by government, but maintained that 'meaningful results' are ultimately what's needed.

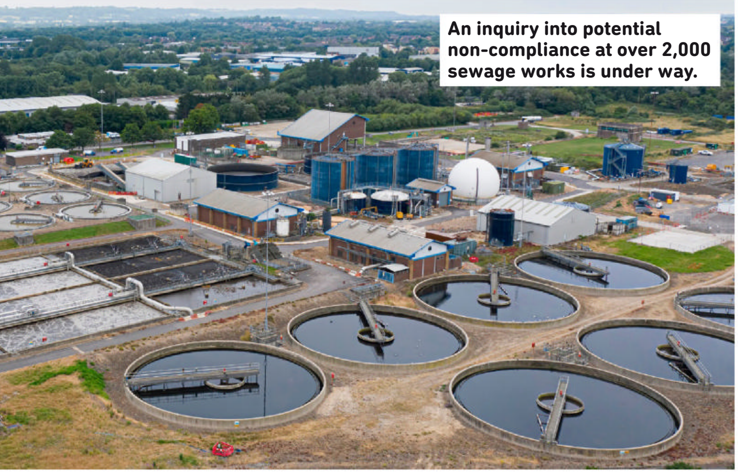
"It's good to see the government and regulators finally catching up with what the Angling Trust and Fish Legal have been saying for years – that water companies are routinely breaking the law and deliberately trashing our environment," he said.

"That's why we have called for a new, powerful single water regulator, rather than the current ineffective shambles which has allowed these privatised companies to treat the environment with total disdain.

WATER COMPANY INVESTIGATIONS

(Jul 2024–Mar 2025)

Anglian Water: 22
Welsh Water: 0
Northumbrian Water: 1
Severn Trent Water: 7
South West Water: 4
Southern Water: 5
Thames Water: 31
United Utilities: 7
Wessex Water: 0
Yorkshire Water: 4
TOTAL: 81



An inquiry into potential non-compliance at over 2,000 sewage works is under way.

"While we welcome this long-overdue focus on inspecting Britain's failing water industry, it is meaningful results that our ailing rivers desperately need.

"Court cases must progress with haste and the money raised from fines should go back into supporting the environment through the River Restoration Fund."

Others, such as staunch environmental campaigner, and angler, Feargal Sharkey – who has been a relentless and driving force in the battle for clean waterways over the past few years – were far harsher in their response to the current Labour government's claim that it was responsible for the big increase in water inspections.

He pointed out that the new figures are actually the result of an investigation launched by the Environment Agency and Ofwat back in 2021, which they described as a 'major investigation into sewage treatment works'.

"That investigation was launched directly as a result of public pressure brought about by the brilliant efforts of community groups, private individuals, and public outrage," Feargal said.

"It's a bit much trying to take credit for other peoples' work four years after the fact."

HUGHES' VIEWS

TV STAR AND CARP MATCH LEGEND LOOKS AT FISHING'S HOT TOPICS

EXCUSES AND OPTIMISM

A GOOD list of excuses is as much a part of an angler's armoury as the story of 'the one that got away'.

As it happens, I'm dusting off my excuses book as I write this. I'm on the bank, and in my mind, I feel that I have a justifiable reason for a poor performance, as opposed to just an excuse. It's a well-used one too, especially in match circles, but simply put, I'm at the wrong end of the lake.

We've all been there, whether it's in a match, a standard session, or in my case a holiday overseas.

All eyes were on pegs 13 and 14 in the middle of the lake. The 'upper doubles' and the very low numbers at opposite ends of the lake are the poor bits, and are definitely not big fish swims.

Sadly, at the draw, No.1 jumped into the hand of my erstwhile angling partner. Bugger!

I can't grumble too much; the last time I had to draw it was OK, and I ended up winning the lake and coming second overall in the match. Not this time, but this is where 'toughing it out' comes into play.

My expectations of a big hit of huge carp were reduced to 'a half decent session' even before the draw, after I'd seen the impending weather forecast. But my swim put paid even to any hopes of that, and the 'expectation-ometer' was further downgraded to 'hopes of scratching a couple out'.

> "Of course, they're slaying them in the usual places"

Of course, they're slaying them in the usual places, and while we thought we might be looking down the barrel of a blank, we've had a couple of fish, which were very welcome.

The next step up will be landing a 'nice one' but smashing it out of the park I most certainly will not be doing. The company and surroundings are great though, and I'm looking at water, not a screen, all day. Maybe an excuse book is the last thing I need?

YOUR TOP CATCHES

THE BEST FISH YOU'VE LANDED THIS WEEK

"HE HOOKED THE FISH AT FIRST LIGHT"

Sam and Mark Church – 18lb bream

"MY SON Sam and I did a quick overnighter on a low stock southern gravel pit, hoping for carp and bream – with such a small head of fish present we couldn't be picky!

"The water is heavily weeded and, when we arrived, we discovered that a few fish had been caught at the far end of the lake.

"Seeing as the wind was still blowing down there, we headed over and set up.

"After about an hour we found a few clear spots amid the thick weed, and just before dark we saw a fish roll over one of Sam's baited spots.

"But it wasn't until first light that he had a few beeps on his alarm and hooked a fish that he steered through dense weed.

"It was this incredible bream, weighing 18lb exactly. It's certainly the fish of a lifetime.

"A 12mm boilie tipped with a grain of plastic corn, fished alongside a small PVA stick of mixed pellets, did the trick."

Sam's top tip: If the venue has low stocks, don't feed too much – we fed just a few Spombs of corn, pellets, and crushed boilies over each rod.

Chris' top tip: Laying down a scattering of mixed small food items is a great tactic for tench, as it will hold them in your swim for longer.

"A DOUBLE-FIGURE MALE!"

Chris Fogg – 10lb 10oz tench

"ON a trip to a Yateley gravel pit I managed a memorable 16-tench catch, capped by this 10lb 10oz male.

"For those that don't know, males are usually significantly smaller, and most double-figure fish are females.

"I caught my fish from a clear silty spot between two weedbeds, where I fished a caster hookbait on an inline lead and a short braided hooklink.

"This was presented over a bed of casters, maggots, hemp and chopped worms."

SEND US YOUR PICS

- newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk
- Make sure your pics are hi-res and that you are in them

"I'LL REMEMBER IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE"

Maciej Mroz – 10lb 3oz tench

"A FEW weeks ago, I caught this 10lb 3oz tench during a carp competition.

"I'm from Poland and, in my country, a tench of this size is very unusual! When I was a child, fishing with bamboo rods, I'd catch them, but nowhere near this big.

"I don't mind admitting that, when I first realised what I'd caught wasn't a carp, I was slightly disappointed, particularly with it being a competition. But when I got a proper look at the tench, I forgot all that. It's a fish I'll remember for the rest of my life.

"A grain of fake corn plus five maggots was the successful hookbait."

"I WAS FISHING FOR TENCH!"

Adam Thomas – 30lb 1oz carp

"I WAS fishing Oxlease Lake at Linear Fisheries in the 2025 National Tench Championship when, on the second morning, my middle rod ripped off!

"I knew it couldn't be a tench, and after a great scrap I landed this 30lb 1oz brute of a mirror carp.

"It fell to a worm hookbait on a short helicopter rig, presented alongside a feeder filled with chopped worm.

"I also had two tench for 13lb 13oz, which was enough to win my section. Not bad for my first time at the fishery!"

Adam's top tip: I used a size 10 hook on this session, which is perfect for tench and also gives you a great chance of landing any carp that turn up.

Lewis' top tip: Although the float is more popular for rudd, feeder fishing can be incredibly effective for the species.

"A PERSONAL BEST BY A MILE"

Lewis Russell – 3lb 1oz rudd

"THE other day I went fishing with my dad to a local water, where I targeted rudd.

"Using a maggot feeder and double maggot hookbait on a size 16, I had this 3lb 1oz fish within a minute of casting in! It fought well, and is a new personal best by a mile. I landed 18 other rudd that day, but none came close to matching this one."

Luke's top tip: Take plenty of bait with you at this time of the year, and don't be afraid to feed it to the fish!

"THE CARP WERE FEEDING WELL"

Luke Gilman – 24lb carp

"I CAUGHT this lovely 24lb common from a private lake this spring while fishing with a friend.

"It was a sunny day and quite warm, and I had a feeling the fish would be waking up and interested in a bit of bait.

"So we introduced a fair bit of feed, topping up regularly, and the carp certainly responded.

"I had several of them, but this one was the biggest."

THE GAME CHANGER

Angling Times
DRENNAN CUP
CATCHES OF THE WEEK
2025 - 2026 SEASON

Gary's 4lb 1oz crucian – the reward for thinking outside the box!

"TRYING A SELDOM-FISHED SWIM RESULTED IN A GREAT CRUCIAN CATCH"

Gary Knowles – 4lb 1oz crucian

"I'VE been targeting the crucians in a Shropshire pool for a few years now and have had some great fish.

"Generally I target the same areas but, on a recent trip, I wanted to try something different. I felt that there might be some bigger fish inhabiting parts of the lake that myself and other anglers rarely bother with.

"You know what it's like on waters like these – sometimes a fish gets caught and 'disappears' for a few years. Perhaps there could be something special lurking in those neglected areas so, on this trip, I headed for a shallow bay in a corner of the lake where I'd never seen another crucian angler.

"It's the kind of place you'd expect to find fish, with plenty of snags and cover.

"The swim was certainly a fair bit trickier to fish than the more popular swims where, generally, you can underarm a feeder to a near-bank feature.

"Here, I targeted some sunken roots on the far bank, around 30 yards away, which made getting the rig into position a little trickier.

"To begin with, I had a few casts with a bare Method feeder with no hooklink attached, and dragged them around a little, to check the bottom was clear.

"It was, so I clipped-up before walking over and introducing a bit of bait, my choice being 2mm Sonubaits Pro pellets and F1 corn.

"Over the top, I cast cut-down boilie hookbaits on my Method feeder rigs.

"At dusk, I was buoyed with confidence as I saw a few large crucians roll directly over my

SONUBAITS
FIN PERFECT
PRO
FEED PELLETS
2 MM

2mm feed pellets kept crucians grubbing around in the swim.

> "Sometimes a fish gets caught and 'disappears' for a few years... perhaps there could be something special lurking in those neglected areas?"

GARY'S TOP 5 CRUCIAN TIPS

- **Find the right balance:** I use a size 16 Preston KKH hook and a 0.15mm Reflo Power hooklink – a strong yet refined combo for crucians.
- **Use a rich groundbait:** Around the feeder I use Sonubaits Match Method mix. It's a coarse blend of crushed pellets.
- **Keep feeding:** A bit of bait regularly going through the water keeps fish interested. Through the night, I keep my radio on and doze occasionally.
- **Be confident:** If crucians are rolling over your baits and you're not catching, don't panic. They can be tricky fish. Have faith in your set-ups.
- **Check your spots:** Before you settle on an area to fish, have a few casts with a bare feeder or lead to make sure it's not snaggy.

baited spot. I decided not to recast that night, knowing that my baits were exactly where I wanted them.

"Throughout the night, I walked around and trickled in a bit of bait every hour or so, which was a slight pain as I didn't get much sleep. But I hoped the effort would be worth it.

"At dawn my plan came good, when I hooked a fish that made a strong push for the sunken roots. I managed to turn it and, as soon as I set eyes on it, I knew it was a 'proper one'.

"It was thick across the back with a plump belly, and so I wasn't at all surprised when it pulled the needle of my scales round to 4lb 1oz – a satisfying start to my crucian campaign.

"Over the next hour or so I landed three other crucians, all of them well over 3lb, which justified my choice of swim.

"On lakes up and down the country there are areas that are neglected for one reason or another. Next time you're out, why not try one of these?

"It could just result in something a little bit special."

AnglingTimes
DRENNAN CUP CATCHES OF THE WEEK
2025 - 2026 SEASON

LOST FISH REDEEMED IN STYLE!

Adam Riches – 18lb 8oz bream

THE last thing any angler wants to do on a tricky venue is lose a fish, but after doing so during a recent session, Adam Riches put things right a few days later with this 18lb 8oz bream – his new personal best for the species.

He was fishing a large Midlands water where, during a trip earlier this spring, Adam had landed a male that was covered in tubercles, leading him to fear that the bream would soon be spawning in the unseasonably warm conditions.

But a cool northerly wind kept them feeding and, after locating some fish in a section of the lake, he was gutted to lose one in the early hours of the morning. However, a few days later he returned and redressed the balance in fine style with the new PB.

A homemade boilie hookbait fished on a helicopter rig to a silty area at range resulted in the all-important bite.

HOW TO ENTER THE DRENNAN CUP

1 CATCH a big coarse fish by design. Take a picture (no blurred or altered backgrounds please), and forward it to freddie.sandford@bauermedia.co.uk

2 DRENNAN picks its favourites. For your first award you win £80, plus a Drennan Weekly Winner's cap and badge.

3 AT the end of the season, readers pick their favourite catches, and the winning angler scoops a cool £2,000!

Running since 1985, the Drennan Cup is Britain's No1 weekly catch competition which rewards anglers who target big coarse fish by design.

THE BIG WIN

DARREN DEFIES THE ODDS FROM AN UNFANCIED AREA

England Masters star turns in a faultless display to reach another major final

BAIT-TECH FEEDERMASTERS QUALIFIER (SUN)
Ferry Meadows (60 pegs)

DARREN Cox went from zero to hero as he secured a memorable victory in the latest Feedermasters qualifier.

Having blanked on his previous two outings, the Garbolino UK boss got back to winning ways in fine style with a performance that saw him bank 13 big bream in the match for a 62lb 8oz total.

Although he's one of the most skilled feeder anglers in the land, Peterborough's Ferry Meadows was one of the few venues that Darren had struggled to get to grips with over the years, but he set the record straight this time with a masterclass from peg 53 on Gunwade Lake.

Angling Times caught up with him to find out how he secured his place in the big-money final...

ONE TO AVOID

"Peg 53 on Gunwade has had zero form in recent years, and I was deflated once I'd picked it out of the bag," Darren said.

"I felt like I could be staring down the barrel of another blank after a few tough weeks. The wheel to my barrow fell off three times as I made my way to the swim, too, so I'm sure you can imagine my early state of mind!

"But, as every angler will tell you, you just never know what can happen in fishing, and I soon pulled myself together and came up with a plan to try and get a few bites.

"The venue is quite weedy, and after carefully plumbing around, I found a clear spot at 54m. This is normally a good line at Ferry, so I was confident I was fishing the right area – if there were any bream around, that is!"

BOLD BEGINNINGS

"I felt that putting a big bed of

Ferry Meadows played host to the latest Feedermasters qualifier.

bait down gave me the best chance of drawing fish in, and I introduced 20 feederfuls at the start.

"Each included a blend of groundbait, casters, corn, pellets and hemp to create a bed for them to graze over. My groundbait mix was an even blend of Mainline Match Green Supreme, 100 per cent Expander and F1 Sweet.

"A patient approach with very few casts with a window feeder was then the plan, because I envisaged that any more disturbance would spook fish that decided to show an interest."

PATIENCE PAYS OFF

"I didn't get any signs on the first three casts, but the fourth and fifth got me off the mark, with a big bream coming on each chuck. My stopwatch was on 16 minutes when the tip went round for both, showing just how important being patient was.

"Another came not long after and, with a few fish clearly in the area, I wanted to capitalise and so put another three feederfuls of bait in.

"One was identical to what I fed at the start, while the other two were sloppier in order to create a cloud in the water.

FEEDER Masters
BAIT-TECH
ADVANCED BAIT SOLUTIONS
FEEDER Masters

The champion is flanked by fellow qualifiers Josh Newman (left) and Mick Vials.

"I switched to a large 45g Guru Hybrid with micros and groundbait on the frame, had three very quick fish, and grew confident they were responding to being fed.

Darren displays the bream haul that sealed him top spot.

"This pattern continued, and as it slowed in the fourth hour, I switched back to a window feeder and caught two more, before a steady final hour on the Hybrid got me up to 13 very big bream."

SUCCESSFUL SET-UPS

"Both of my set-ups incorporated a 13ft Garbolino Essential Distance Feeder rod with a Long Cast Feeder Reel that was spooled up with 0.12mm braided mainline and a 10lb shockleader. Medium and large Nisa Rockets and a large 56g Guru Window feeder were rotated on one rod, with a 0.20mm hooklength to a size 12 hook.

"The Hybrid feeder rod had a 4ins hooklength of 0.20mm to a size 12 QM1 hook.

"I encountered bream to 7lb and was delighted to have landed every single fish that I hooked on the day."

RESULT: 1 D Cox, Garbolino, 62-8-0; 2 M Vials, NuFish, 50-6-0; 3 S Welford, 47-1-0; 4 G Lambert, Preston Innovations/SonuBaits, 43-2-0.
QUALIFIERS: D Cox, M Vials, J Newman.

IN BRIEF

SWAN SEALS EASY VICTORY

WEIGHT decided the two-day festival at Weston Pools, where Rob Swan sealed a convincing win.

He started his campaign from peg 36 on Clay Pit and worked with pellets shallow early before targeting the margins later on for 161lb to win the day.

He backed that up in style on day two, putting together 184lb 8oz from peg 17 on the same lake to win the match yet again and put a total of 345lb 8oz on the board.

Tom Scholey was the nearest pursuer, finishing with 225lb 4oz.

GRIFFITHS SHRUGS OFF HEARTBREAK

MARK Griffiths put a near miss during a recent big-money match qualifier at Hayfield Lakes behind him by going one better just days later.

The Guru-backed angler finished second to Kieran Marsden during the Golden Reel heat, and he returned shortly afterwards to try and put the record straight in the Maver Match This qualifier.

He made no mistake, putting 126lb 14oz on the scales from peg 72 on Island Pool to win and reach the final. A late run down the margins proved key after a slow start.

BENWELL REIGNS AT TUNNEL BARN

A SELL-OUT field of 120 anglers turned out to take part in the over-50s festival at Tunnel Barn Farm, and it was Andy Benwell that took the victory after three days of action.

He was the only angler to record a perfect three-point score, and he got the event underway with a 70lb 3oz section win from peg 46 on High Pool.

He secured the same result on day two with 112lb 11oz from peg 30 on Top Pool, then bagged the third zonal victory with 80lb from peg 15 on Club Pool.

GET READY WITH

DANNY MARTIN

CONQUER SHALLOW AND NARROW CANALS

THE warmer weather has led to sport on most types of venue becoming a little easier in recent weeks – but there is an exception to that rule.

Shallow and narrow canals can be tough nuts to crack, once the temperatures creep up, because an increase in boat traffic and bankside activity can leave the fish in a constant state of anxiety.

A memorable day on the towpath certainly isn't out of the question, though, but it's those willing to remain active from start to finish who are likely to reap the greatest rewards.

Target the right areas of your swim, be prepared to catch everything from hand-sized silvers to bonus bream, and you'll outperform plenty of others who are trying to master the art of early summer canal fishing.

GIVE IT A GO

PRIME THREE LINES

Swim rotation is vital to keeping fish coming. Switch between an 8m line at an angle with worms for bonus fish, a long pole line with pinkies over groundbait in shallower water – as it slopes up the far bank – and a hemp line to a moored boat or far-bank branches. Fish rarely settle in one spot, so moving between the three lines is the key to success.

Sensas 3000 CANAL
LAKE
Match Blend
Sensas 3000

CREATE A SCENT TRAIL

You may not be directly on the fish at the start of your session, and the baits that you feed can help attract them. For the 8m line, mash half a pot of worms to a pulp with scissors before adding a few casters. A 40/40/20 ratio of Sensas Canal Fine 3000, Lake and Match Blend is a flavoursome groundbait to get the long pole line going.

EXPLORE YOUR BAITED ZONES

Fishing directly over your baited spots will get early results but, as time moves on, searching the surrounding area will lead to more bites. The rig for your groundbait line should have 2ft-3ft of line between pole-tip and float, so you can flick the rig further out. Going slightly beyond where you've been fishing all day can suddenly result in extra bites.

LEAVE HEMP UNTIL LAST

You should prime your hemp line from the off, with a small cup of it going in at the start before pinging a dozen grains over the top every 10 minutes. Quality roach are the main target here, but it will take them a while to settle. Keep working the catapult for at least two hours before you fish the hemp line, and that way you won't spook them.

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"BIG IMPROVEMENTS IN A VERY UNEXPECTED WAY"

Our Tackle Tester **Dan Webb** finds out how a market leading margin pole has been made even better

HOW WE TEST OUR GEAR

Our team of tackle experts use their years of angling experience to test new gear to its limits.
Dan Webb, Tackle Editor

HOW do you improve upon the best-selling margin pole of all time? Preston's Edge Monster is not only incredibly strong, but it's light enough to remain manageable and stiff enough to remain in control of heavily-loaded pole pots while shipping out.

Combine all that with great affordability, bushed and ready to go top kits, a slick marketing campaign and a catchy name, and you have a formula for a huge seller.

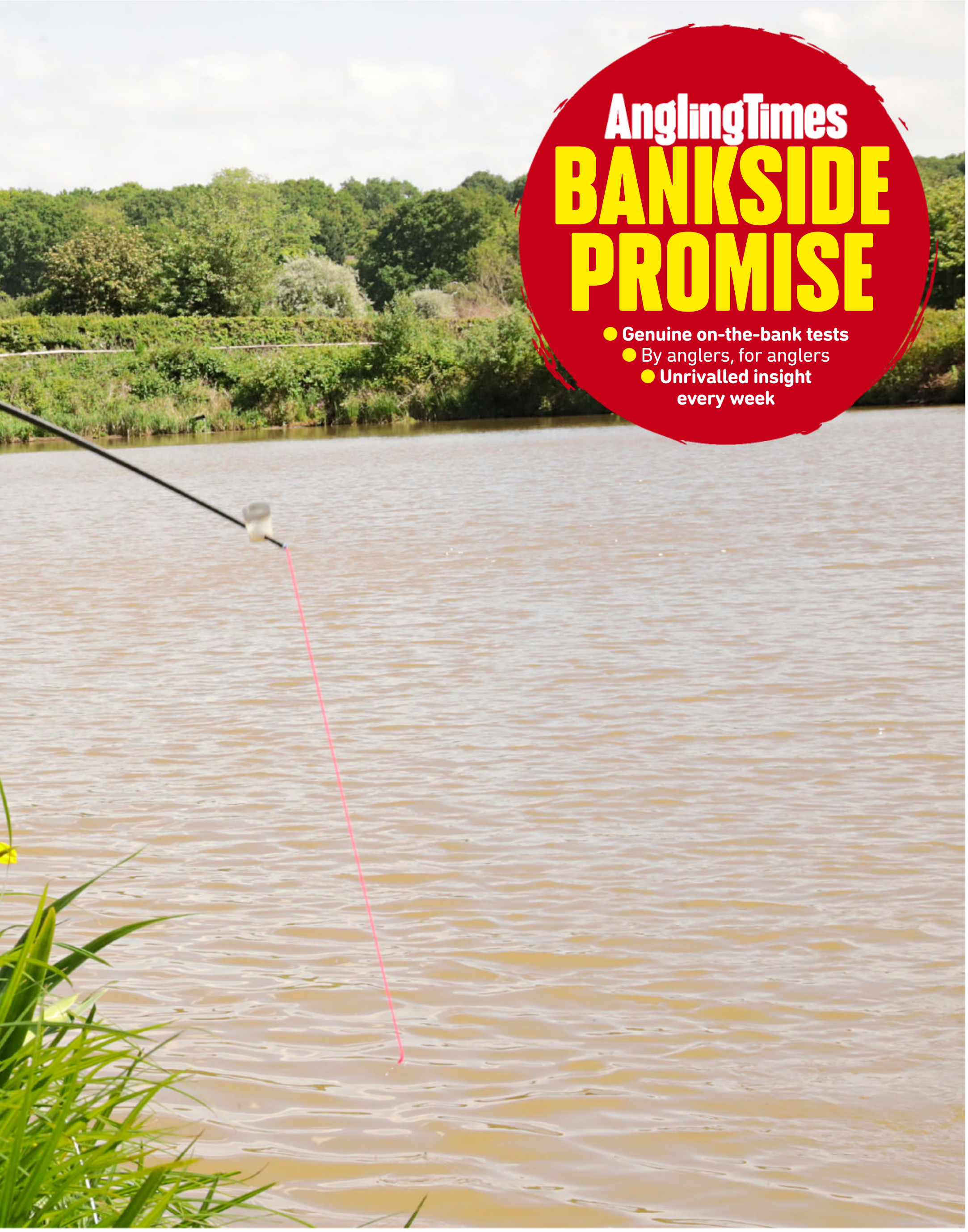
Surprisingly, the way to make it better is to improve the top kits. This might not be the exciting answer you were looking for, but this is actually a far bigger deal than what it seems, so please read on!

First of all, I need to make a little disclaimer. There are no statistics out there to truly know what the best-selling margin pole of all time is. However, I believe it's the Edge. Not only do my friends in retail tell me how many they have sold, but the evidence is there on the bank.

Visit a commercial and have a walk around. Ignore the open matches with sponsored anglers – they probably make up just 10 per cent of anglers at most. The people to look at are the pleasure anglers and the club anglers. When I watch these guys, I see more of them using Edge Monsters than anything else.

Hugely popular as it is, the original Edge was not perfect. To get the action and overall length of the pole correct, the top kits were on the long side at 2.9m. This meant that not only did fish tend to come to the surface a little further out, making netting more laboured, but it meant they also held more elastic.

Getting your pole elastic correct is a balancing act that is often difficult. We all want a soft and smooth elastic that



Angling Times

BANKSIDE PROMISE

- Genuine on-the-bank tests
- By anglers, for anglers
- Unrivalled insight every week

allows you to sneak big fish away from snags, yet has the power to keep them under control when they power off.

Nobody wants to see a fish roll three pegs away with a ridiculous amount of elastic streaming across the lake! The key lies not just in choosing the correct grade, but having the right amount of it in your top kit. These longer top kits often meant Edge users had to use a grade higher elastic than what they would have preferred, meaning it was harsher on the strike than required, but still kept the fish under control. This obviously wasn't a deal breaker for Edge users, as we know from its popularity, but that doesn't mean that Preston didn't want to improve it.

With a huge amount of work having gone into getting the Superium top kits right for Preston's premium pole range, it makes absolute sense for the new Edge Monster to share these. Yes, it does mean that your old Edge top kits will not fit the new one, or any other section for that matter, but it's a necessary consequence, as the whole pole has had to be redesigned from the top kit down.

At 2.4m, not only are the top kits shorter, as they're identical to those of the Superium you no longer have to keep your top kits separated – they can all go together in the same case, as you can use any top kit or cupping kit on either pole.

Even if you want to own just the one pole, as many Edge users do, you also get a far bigger range of top kits you can use. Although designed for fishing down the edge, or a short pole line, and coming with two Superium Carp kits for this, should you wish to fish for smaller species, you can use a lighter Match top kit

OUR VERDICT ▶

Extra-strong dolly butt to reach the full 9.5m length.

Discreet depth markers on the top kits.

-S-
DEPTH MARKER INDICATORS
ROLLER
PULLASYSTE

Easy Glide finish for smooth shipping.

Roller pullers are pre-fitted.

> **"The whole pole has had to be redesigned from the top kit down"**

on your Edge. You can even use the short one-piece F1 kits, should you wish too.

So, with a complete change of mandrel and top kits, will the new Edge be as good as the last one? I took it to The Glebe to find out.

There is no doubting it has a different feel, which should be no surprise, as it is a different pole. However, it remains lightweight and balanced.

Its rigidity is an interesting point. It feels stiff, and wobbled very little while shipping, and I was able to keep very good control of the float.

Hitting into a fish, it gave just the right amount of bend, enough to provide some cushioning yet not so much that it would scare the user into thinking it would break, because that is something this will not do – unless you hit it with a rock or try to catapult a house brick with it, of course!

Believe me, I did not hold back, and gave this pole far more stick than I needed to.

So, the big question is, would I buy one? Well, if I already owned an Edge Monster and was more than happy with its two top kits, I don't think I'd part with it.

However, if I wanted to start using it for catching silvers or F1s, or just needed a few more top kit options, or maybe my old margin pole was a little past its best, or I already owned a Superium pole, I would not hesitate to go ahead with the upgrade!

Price: £249.99, www.prestoninnovations.com

BANKSIDE TEST VERDICT

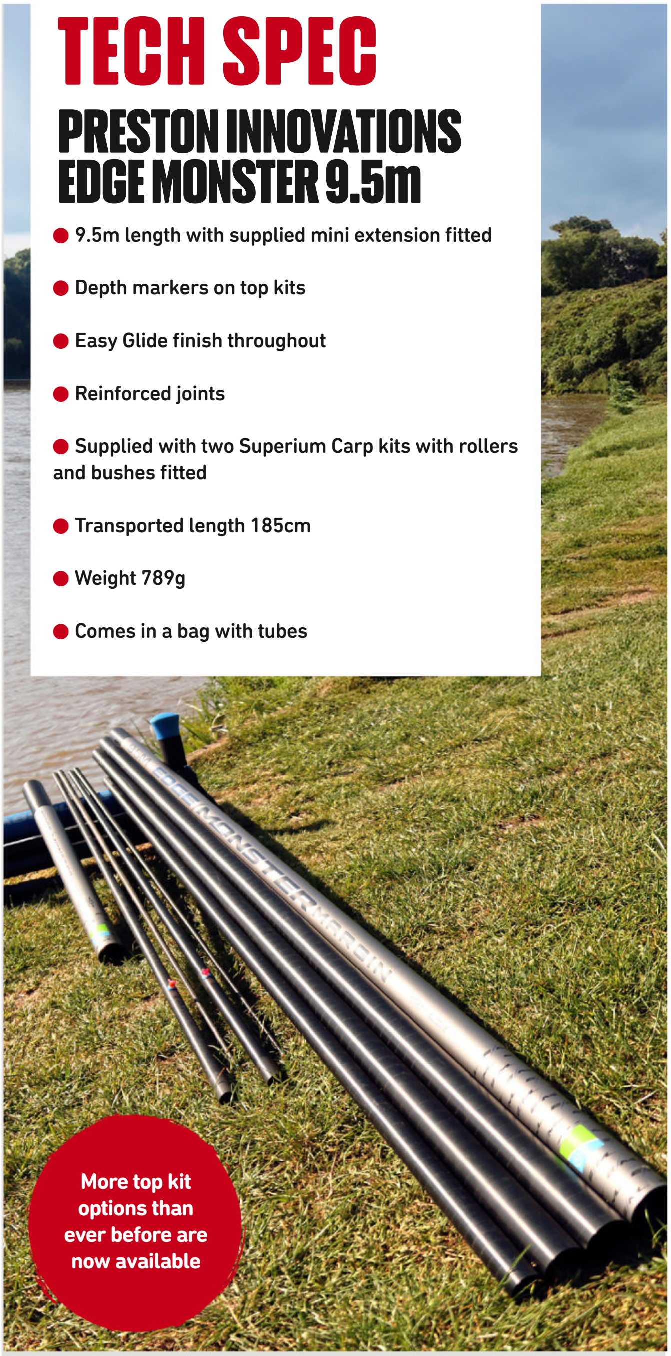
+ **Strong and powerful, while remaining light and stiff enough to keep in control of your rig and pole pot**

+ **Pre-bushed top kits with rollers fitted mean that once elastic is fitted, you are ready to fish**

+ **The use of Superium top kits opens up a whole host of other options and uses for your margin pole**

+ **Includes professional features like depth markers, top kits and an Easy Glide finish**

− **A cupping kit isn't included, but a Superium kit and cups is available for £54.99**



TECH SPEC

PRESTON INNOVATIONS EDGE MONSTER 9.5m

- 9.5m length with supplied mini extension fitted
- Depth markers on top kits
- Easy Glide finish throughout
- Reinforced joints
- Supplied with two Superium Carp kits with rollers and bushes fitted
- Transported length 185cm
- Weight 789g
- Comes in a bag with tubes

More top kit options than ever before are now available

OUR PICK OF THE ALTERNATIVES

ON A BUDGET

GURU A-CLASS POWER MARGIN 8M

Price: £149.99

IT MIGHT be just 8m long and come with only one top kit, but check out that price! A great performing pole with top kits compatible with all Guru poles. **www.tackleguru.com**

SIMILAR PRICE

DAIWA MATCHMAN POWER MARGIN 9M

Price: £250

NOT only is this pole incredibly strong and light, but it comes with two top kits, a cupping kit and a padded holdall. Additional top kits are just £40. **www.daiwasports.co.uk**

TOP END

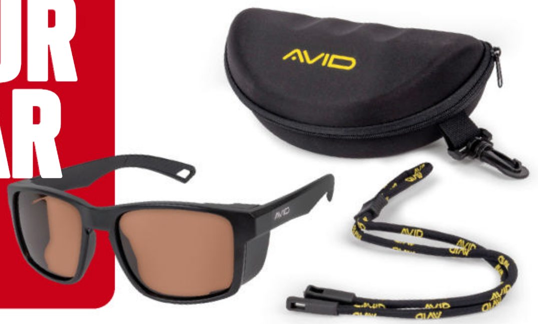
SHIMANO AERO PRO MARGIN 11.5M

Price: £549.99

LONGER than most competitors at 11.5m, it's strong light, stiff and very tough. Three top kits make it surprisingly good value for the quality of pole you get. **www.fish.shimano.com**

ON OUR RADAR

Our pick of the latest goodies to hit the banks



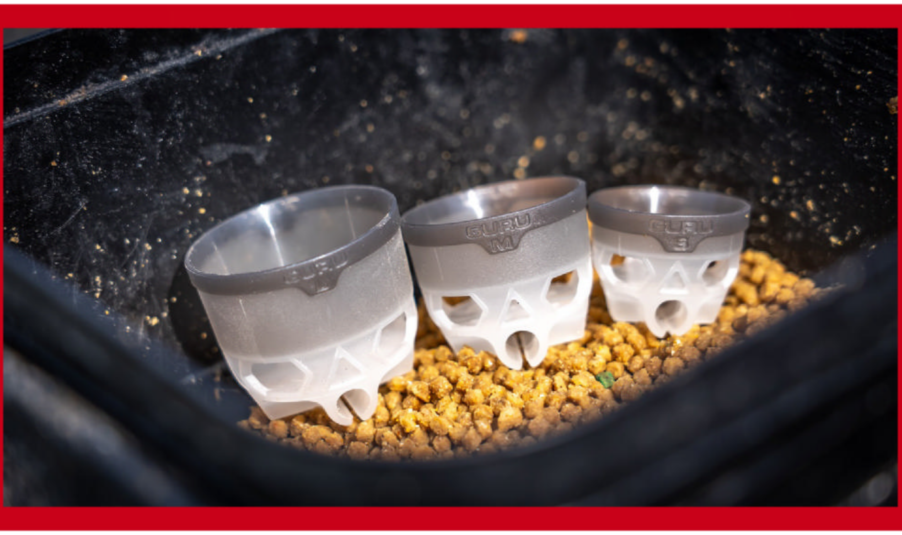
AVID SEETHRU BLINKER POLARISED SUNGLASSES

WHAT THEY SAY: Part of a new range of seven sunglasses, the Blinker blocks unwanted light from entering the sides of your glasses, enhancing overall vision and clarity.

With impact-resistant polarised TAC brown lenses, they are ideal for spotting fish on bright sunny days while providing UV400 protection. Supplied with a protective hard case and lanyard.

WHAT WE SAY: These might not be the height of fashion, but you will be able to spot plenty of fish and keep your eyes protected with this highly functional design of shades. A vital tool to assist good watercraft in the summer.

Price: £19.99, www.avidcarp.com



GURU FAST RELEASE POLE POTS

WHAT THEY SAY: A tapered profile and strategically placed drainage holes in the base and sides allow groundbait and micro pellets to be flushed out quickly and quietly – especially important when fishing shallow water in the margins or against mud lines. Two slits in the base and the flexible grippy material allow perfect positioning on most makes of pole. Available in small, medium and large.

WHAT WE SAY: These are unlikely to completely replace the original pole pots, which are still available and perfect for baits like hard pellets and maggots, but they are a game changer for baits that are pressed into a pot such as groundbait, soft pellets and mushy meat or worms.

Price: £5.49 for two, www.tackleguru.com

GURU SUPER SIX-INCH MWG BANDED READY RIGS

WHAT THEY SAY: The perfect go-to hooklength for summer carp fishing on the pole. Available in sizes 10 through to 18, the smaller sizes are equipped with a micro bait band for use with 4mm, 6mm and 8mm pellets, while the size 10 comes with a larger band for 8mm pellets and above.

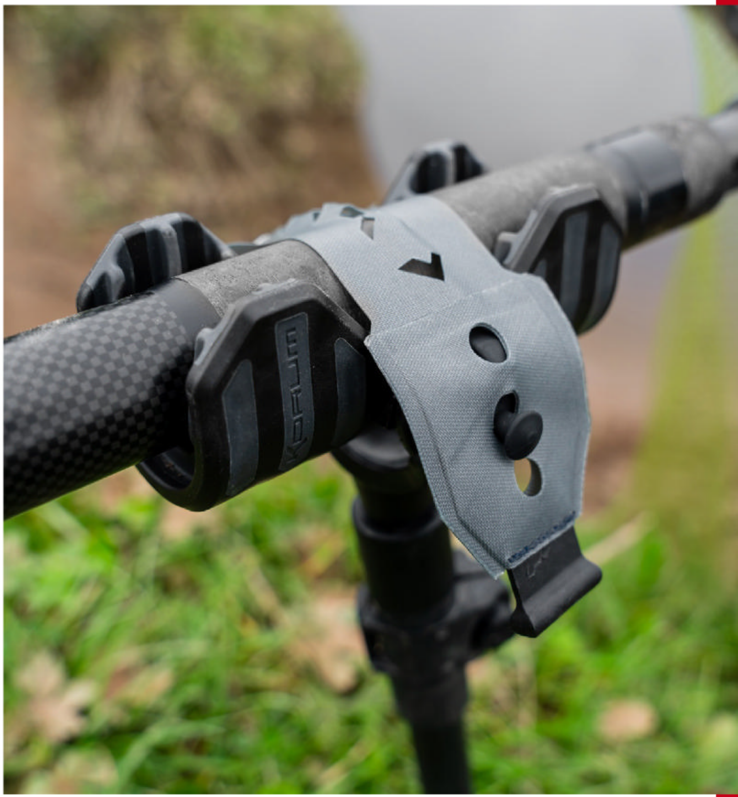
Six inches long, they are perfect for open-water fishing. They fit straight into the Guru hooklength boxes as they are, or they can be cut down to four inches, should the situation dictate.

For added versatility, the size 18s are available in a choice of 0.15mm and 0.17mm breaking strains, and the 16s in 0.17mm and 0.19mm.

WHAT WE SAY: Slapping, mugging carp shallow or fishing on the deck – if you fish and feed hard unsoaked pellets on summer commercials, then these are the pattern for you.

Price: £3.75, www.tackleguru.com

GURU
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
14
16
16 SUPER
18
18 SUPER MWG
READY RIGS
6"
8



KORUM ADJUSTABLE NET SAVER

WHAT THEY SAY: Keep your net and net handle captive with this adjustable Net Saver. It can be used even on steep riverbanks and slopes, while the ultra-tough retaining strap works to keep your net handle safely in position. Soft rubber parts provide grip in wet conditions. Multiple positions are available to suit different net handles, and it screws into a standard bank stick thread. It measures 9cm x 10cm x 8cm.

WHAT WE SAY: Quite a niche item this which, in the right situation, will be indispensable. Ideal for pegs where keeping your landing net close to hand and avoiding snagging in bankside vegetation proves difficult.

Price: £15.99, www.korum.co.uk

THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE – FOR UNDER £90!

Can a sub-£100 feeder chair really hold its own against pricier rivals? We put the Decathlon Caperlan CSB Adjust Feeder Chair through its paces to find out...

The Caperlan CSB is perfect for pleasure sessions.

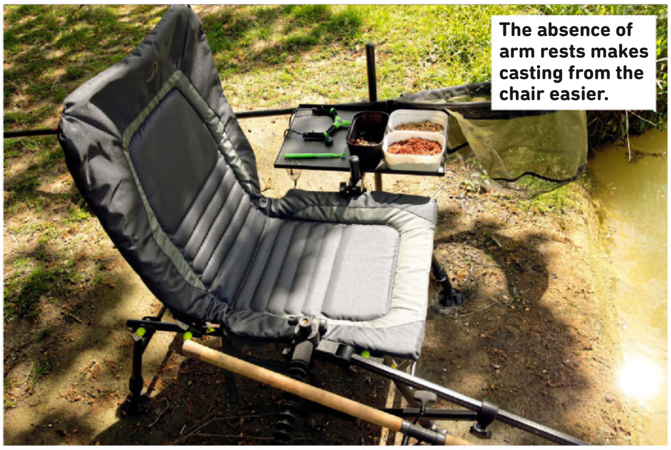
FEEDER chairs are currently more popular than ever.

There are loads of comfortable chairs aimed at specimen anglers, allowing them to lounge back while waiting for a bite.

A feeder chair is a little different. These aren't just used to sit on in between spells of action – they are designed to be fished from. This means casting, striking, feeding and playing fish from a seated position.

This has led to the inclusion of side trays, rod rests, and the ability to take further accessories if required, as well as adjustable legs. All these extra features obviously bump the price right up, with most chairs coming in at well over £100. There is, though, one that sells for the bargain price of just £89.99.

The Caperlan CSB Feeder Chair has four independently adjustable telescopic legs, swivelling mudfeet and a fully padded mattress area, and comes with a side tray with support leg and an angle-adjustable telescopic feeder arm with head – in fact, everything the average angler needs to go fishing!



The absence of arm rests makes casting from the chair easier.

Now, I often believe that if something is too good to be true, it probably is, so I felt compelled to have a closer look at this chair, and see if it really is up to the job.

Although available in Decathlon stores, I'd guess most people would order one online and have it delivered at a cost of around £6 to £8. This will mean some assembly, as it comes in a box. Thankfully, it comes pretty much in one piece, with just the rotating accessory arms needing to be screwed on. These are 25mm in diameter, meaning any 25mm accessory on the market should fit them.

Threaded attachment arms will take any 25mm accessory.

Out on the bank, I found it surprisingly comfortable, not just for fishing the feeder, but the waggler and pole too.

The telescopic legs are held in place by a spring-loaded mechanism. Although they will slip if you jump on the chair, in normal use you'll have no problems at all. I'm quite tall, so I found I had to extend the legs a fair way, and was pleased to find they still had adjustment to spare.

The feeder arm is not of the

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The feeder arm's dual leg design ensures great stability.

The sturdy side tray can hold eight, one-pint bait tubs.

highest quality I've seen, but was more than up to the job and is surprisingly stable, thanks to its dual arm design.

It's also more adjustable than some far more expensive models I've seen, as it's telescopic, angle-adjustable, and can even be tweaked further by rotating the attachment arms on the leg.

The side tray is a little small, but can take eight one-pint bait boxes and can be stored in a pocket behind the chair. It's incredibly stable, thanks to its support leg, which is ideal for holding your landing net if you get an additional foam bar or U-rest type attachment.

The whole thing packs away and folds down into one unit for carrying, using the attached carry handle or the detachable shoulder strap.

In reality, the feeder arm and support leg for the side tray kept falling out of the Velcro retainers, so I'd advise carrying those in a separate luggage piece like a carryall or bait bag. Other than that, it all worked pretty well. But, if you are still not happy, Decathlon also does a bag for the chair which sells for £29.99.

Being a tackle connoisseur, I'd love to look down my nose and give this humble little chair a snooty review, but I can't, as it does the job too well! If it's properly looked after, I can see it giving many years of sound service.

Price: £89.99, www.decathlon.co.uk

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The 25mm legs will take a whole host of

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WHY NOT FISH FOR THE SHEER FUN OF IT?

I reckon that taking a break from specimen-hunting to go pleasure fishing is a tonic for the soul

THE Atlantic spreads over the distant horizon all the way to America, and I'm sitting on a rock with the salty scent of seaweed in my nostrils, gazing out over the endless expanse of blue.

The sea here in Cornwall is clear and inviting, its reefs home to a colourful kaleidoscope of fish, all hopefully eager to sample my

ragworm bait. Meantime, perched as far west as I can be in the British Isles, I'm happy just to be here, awaiting my first bite.

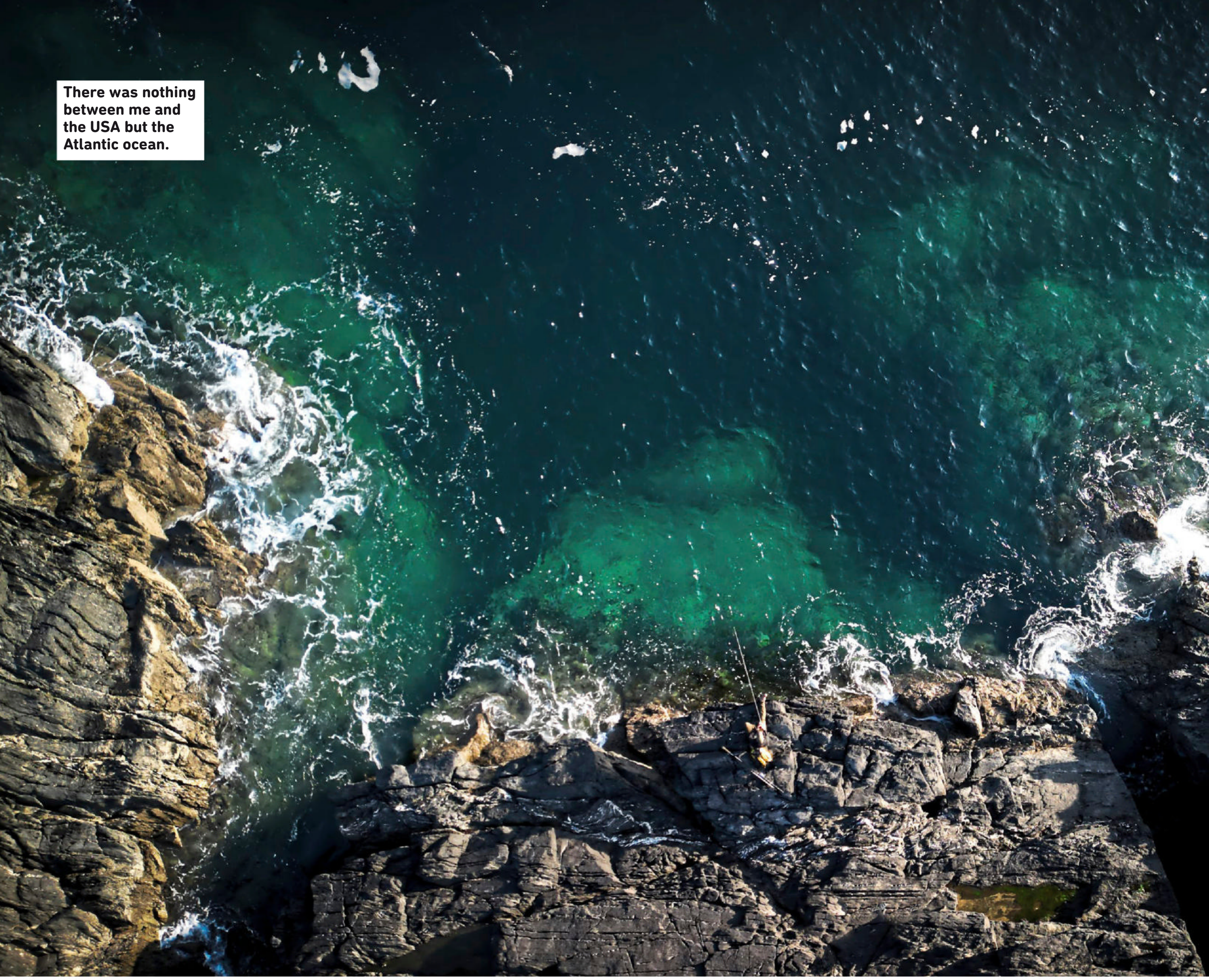
‘The tug is the drug’ as the saying goes and, be it from a powerful wrasse or a diminutive goby, I'll get the same thrill. If you’re an angling addict like me there are so many opportunities and places to explore. So it should come as no surprise that only 48 hours earlier I’d been in Hertfordshire, taking on a completely different angling challenge.

What might surprise you is, I didn’t have a chance of catching a really big fish!

I’m the fishing equivalent of a stamp collector, constantly wanting to add new

Continued over the page

Bream to 5lb were great fun on the quivertip.

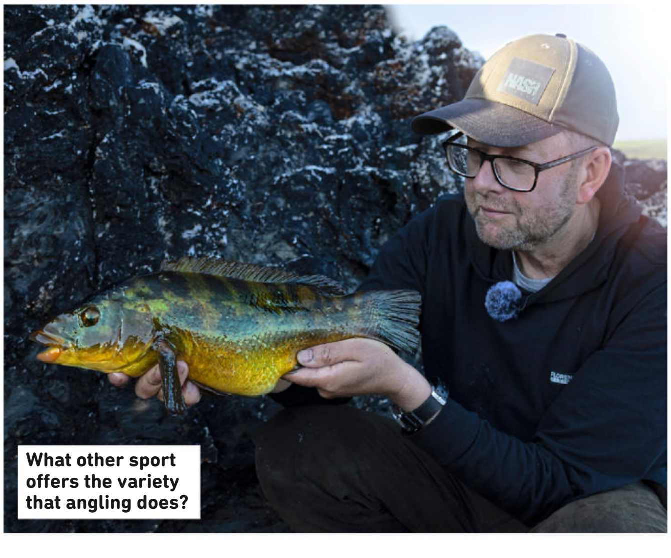


There was nothing between me and the USA but the Atlantic ocean.

experiences to my photo album, and not just of the specimen-hunting kind.

Good pleasure fishing is sometimes more enjoyable, and most definitely great fun – besides, I suspect that this is probably the favourite pastime of the majority of *Angling Times* readers, and it was high time I went in pursuit of a mixed bag.

I was due to travel to Nash HQ to record an interview for a forthcoming Scope film, and I wanted to make the most of the three-and-a-half-hour journey. So I chose to travel up the day before and find a place to wet a line for the afternoon, then have a sleep in the van before going to do my work.



What other sport offers the variety that angling does?

But where could I go? A call to an old friend, Keith, provided me with the answer. Lysander Lake is run on a syndicate basis, but it's mainly for anglers who prefer seatboxes over bivvies, and bites over big fish.

It contains a good head of the obligatory carp, but I was more interested in the bream – modest in size but present in great numbers, just perfect for a bagging session. The thought of the quivertip constantly pulling round was just my cup of tea.

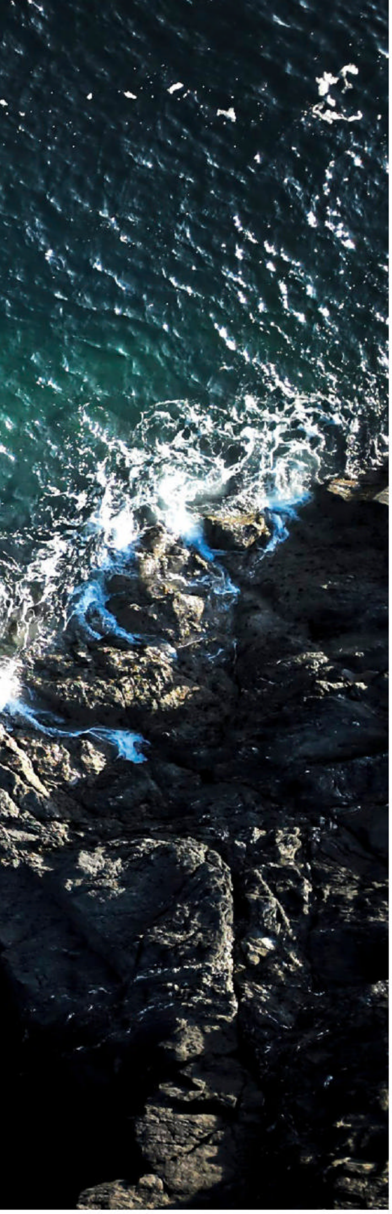
Lysander sits in arable land, one of a chain of irrigation lakes for the farm. It's out in open fields, but a frame of trees acts as a windbreak, and today weeping willows offered shade to me and any carp that wanted to avoid the afternoon sun.

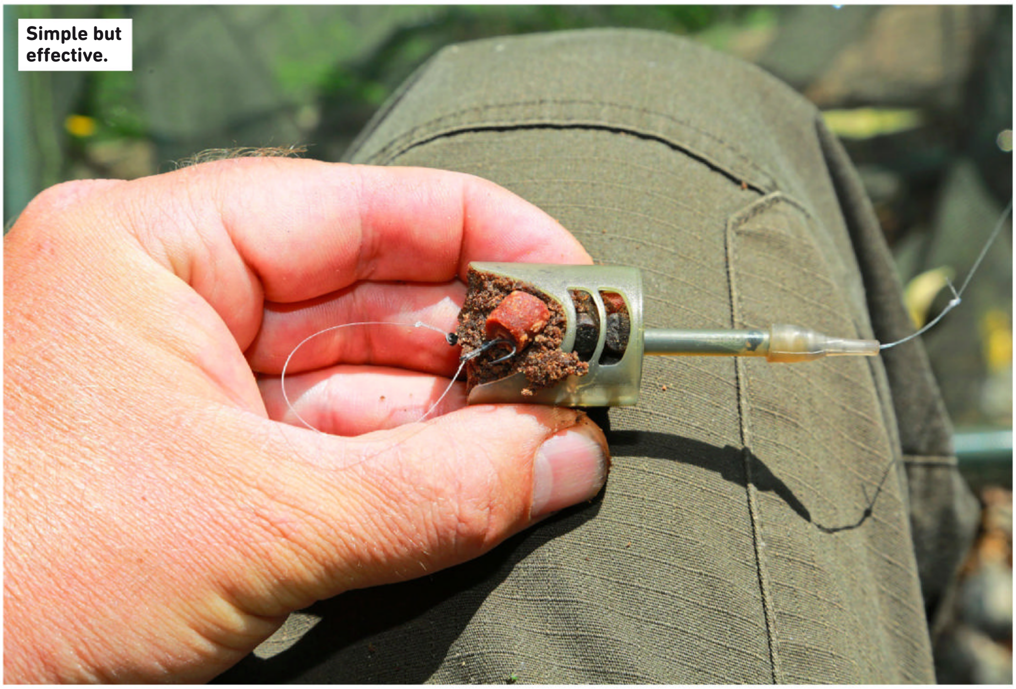
This wasn't the best time of day to fish, but I was sure that if I did it right something would take my bait.

My only regret was that I'd neglected to bring a swingtip rod to add some vintage fun, so my 1990s carbon quivertip rod would have to do service on that front! Through the eyes I threaded 8lb mono, then tied a loop in it to attach the terminal tackle. This was an elasticated pellet feeder carrying a ready-tied 7lb hooklength to a size 14 hook.

I'm no different to anyone else when it comes to convenience – I just don't have

"My only regret was that I'd neglected to bring a swingtip rod"





Simple but effective.

the time to make everything myself, and why should I, given the incredible array of options available in modern tackle shops?

The feeder would carry a pinch of 6mm pellets every cast and, if I wanted a change, I also had casters with me.

I did feel, though, that I should kick-start my swim with something more substantial, and the baiting-up feeder I had with me wasn't big enough for the task.

So instead I introduced two payloads via an old spod, guaranteed to empty out all the bait when you're only making an underarm cast.

Spombs are great, but will often fail to open in this situation if they land side-on.

Of course, I could have catapulted out the feed, but this was quicker, and something I often do when I'm floatfishing and want to introduce a bed of bait.

Preparation complete, I pulled a pellet on to the band as though I was using a standard hair, rather than squeezing the pellet into it. To my mind this looks far neater, and the expanded latex inside the pellet hole grips the sides and doesn't pull out.

A shoal of these hybrids also kept me busy.

For short-range work a spod is more reliable than a Spomb.

Half-a-dozen halibuts and robin reds were put in the chamber and sealed off with a groundbait nugget before being cast out. At such close range there was no need for wrap sticks or markers, and I'd recast every 10 minutes.

The soft quivertip would tell me the state of play because, as the fish began to gather over the feed, line bites would begin. But to spot these I needed a stable platform in the form of a Nufish Restabox. This allows me to keep the bait close to hand on a tray, and combines the convenience of a seatbox with the comfort of a chair.

I knew the fish had arrived in my swim when I received slow pulls on the tip, which then sprang back. It was tempting to strike but, as bream were the main quarry, I sat on my hands until there was no doubting a positive indication. When one came, it was generally from a 5lb bream, with the odd rogue carp making an appearance.

Later in the day a bizarre shoal of crucian/goldfish hybrids joined in the fun, keeping me busy all afternoon and able to forget about the rest of the world. Time slips by so quickly when you're having fun.

Back to the Cornish coast, I'm now perched on a seaweed-covered rock. Soon the tide will run and I'll be battling big ballans – a world away from the arable land, but I love the joy and sheer variety I get from my pleasure fishing, wherever I happen to be.

TARGET AREA

- Flat spot around 40 yards out, over light silt

BAIT NEEDED

- Live and dead maggots
- Casters
- Mixed particles
- Groundbait
- 2mm and 4mm high-oil pellets

VENUE FISHED

- Walthamstow Reservoirs, London

EXPERT ADVICE

TO HELP YOU MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME ON THE BANK

THE MASTERPLAN

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO BIG-HIT BREAM SUCCESS!

Neale Woodward outlines his positive and well-honed tactical approach for catching specimen-sized slabs

LOVE them or loathe them, there's no denying that big bream are impressive creatures. They can offer fantastic sport, too, particularly on venues where there are good numbers of fish present.

To catch them, it's easy to assume you can pile in a load of feed, wait for the shoal to rock up, and start bagging.

But to have a truly memorable session, a little more thought is required.

Specimen angler Neale Woodward has enjoyed excellent sport with the species over recent seasons, landing not only numbers of fish, but some impressive individual specimens to boot.

There are numerous venues across the country where you can target big bream, and often some of the best sport is on carp lakes, where the

bream have grown large and yet are often neglected.

London's Walthamstow Reservoirs is a favourite complex of Neale's. There are big bream across this iconic fishery, with fish to upper double figures reported, but for regular bites, with some real specimens mixed in, the fishery's Lower Maynard Lake is Neale's choice.

"Although best known for its carp, the average stamp of bream is in the low double figures, and I've had them to 16lb 4oz over recent seasons," he told us.

"The fishing can be fantastic, and you can stumble across them in all areas of the lake. But wherever you fish, it's crucial to get your feeding and tactics right."

Neale makes his own particle mix, which he boosts with various liquids.

STAGE 1

CREATE A CARPET OF FEED

"I think of big bream as being like a herd of cattle, so I give them a bed of mixed feed to graze over and keep them occupied.

"A key part of my baiting is a homemade particle mix, containing groats, kibbled maize, partiblend and hemp. This keeps the fish on the spot and searching for food.

"I also introduce 2mm and 4mm high-oil pellets which, alongside the particles, will reach the bottom and hold fish there.

"Additionally, I'll feed groundbait. A sweet or fishmeal Method mix is my choice.

"To this, I add corn, casters and dead maggots. The dead maggots are an important element of the mix, as they'll sit on top of any debris on the bottom, rather than wriggling into the silt as live ones tend to do.

"I'm a big fan of flavours in my fishing, and I add molasses, corn steep liquor, hemp oil and shrimp hydrolysate to the mix. I'm confident about doing so, as I like to make my feed as potent as possible.

"To kick off, I like to introduce a decent bit of bait, and my initial feed will generally be 10 Spombs of groundbait, a pint of dead maggots and a pint of casters, plus 10 Spombs of pellets and 10 Spombs of my particle mix.

"Not every venue requires that much bait initially, and you should always ease your way in if you're unsure of how much to put in. You can always top up if the fish arrive in numbers!"

STAGE 2
OFFER A 'CHERRY ON TOP'

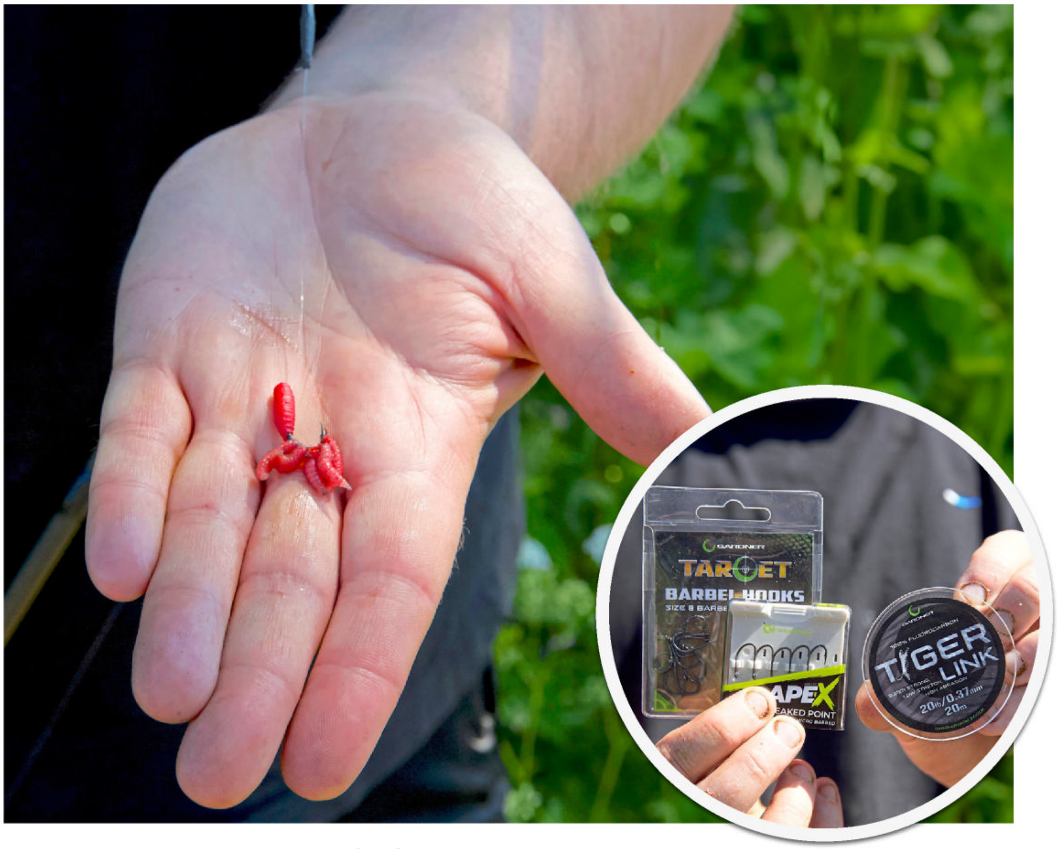
"Over my feed, I cast a maggot feeder, filled with live red maggots, and my hookbait, which is a bunch of red maggots. I see this as the 'cherry on top' of the bait, standing out among the freebies.

"I rig this heli-style, using a Bank Tackle Heli System, which incorporates a small top bead that the hooklink can easily pull over, should I suffer a breakage.

"This is fished on 12lb Gardner GT HD Mainline down to a short hooklink of 20lb Gardner Tiger Link. That may sound heavy, but I like its stiffness, and the bream don't seem to mind!

"I use size 6 and 8 hooks. Up the shanks, I slide a fake maggot and hook on five live ones afterwards. Flying backleads keep everything pinned down while I'm fishing.

"At night, as there are lots of eels in Walthamstow, I'll generally switch to a Method feeder, loaded with scalded pellets, and use a small dumbbell boilie hookbait or a bit of fake corn. These deter the eels more than maggots do!"



STAGE 3
KEEPING IT TICKING OVER

"As mentioned, I start off by fishing with a maggot feeder, but once I feel there's enough bait in the swim, I'll switch to a window feeder.

"This cuts down on the number of live maggots entering the swim and helps to home the fish in on my hookbait.

"If I'm not catching or having signs of fish in the swim after that initial feed, such as line bites, I won't keep topping up the bait.

"However, if I've been getting bites and things suddenly go quiet, I like to feed some sloppy groundbait, which I make by over-wetting a bit of my mix with an atomiser. This tool also helps me to keep my groundbait in perfect condition throughout the session.

"Not only does this create a bit of noise in the swim as the Spomb lands, but it also creates a cloud that lingers in the water column. I think this can catch the eye of a fish cruising in the upper layers, which bream certainly do when it's warm.

"I'll recast my feeders roughly every hour or so to keep a bit of bait going through the swim and create a bit of noise for the fish to home in on."

STAGE 4
BIG PIT TRICKS

"Fishing large waters like those at Walthamstow can be a daunting prospect, but there are a few things you can do to make things easier for yourself.

"First, think about the spot you target. On Lower Maynard, the lakebed is pretty level, so I pick a spot around 40 yards out and fish there. If you've not done much Spombing before, fish at a comfortable range where you can be accurate and hit the clip almost every time.

"Tow is something to consider on big waters. It can have an impact on where your feed lands, so I feed my groundbait in rough balls, formed with a one-handed squeeze. I riddle my mix to keep it fluffy, ensuring the balls break down easily once they near the bottom.

"I also use heavy bobbins, which help to combat the tow and show bites positively.

"When Spombing, I don't like to feed everything on a tight spot for bream, so every few casts I'll take a step back, which helps to spread the bait over an area.

"Earlier, I mentioned that I add oils to my feed. I not only think the fish like them, but they also indicate when something is on my bait, as a slick will flatten the lake's surface above my spot."

STAGE 5
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

"The day the *Angling Times* cameras joined me on the bank coincided with an exceptionally hot spell and a high-pressure front rolling in – conditions any bream angler knows are far from ideal!

"When I first arrived, I could see the fish sat right up in the water, and on my first night I didn't catch anything at all.

"I was fearing the worst, but I persevered, and on the second night I managed my first few fish, capped by a 13lb 3oz male, landed just in time for a few pictures!

"During the hot days the fishing was tricky, but by introducing a few Spombs of sloppy groundbait and making regular recasts, I managed another fish of 13lb 8oz through the day, this time a female.

"That night things really kicked off, with a flurry of fish coming to the net. My total for the session was 10 fish, and eight of those were 'doubles'!

"If you fancy a bream session to remember over the coming weeks, try my approach on a water near you. If all goes well, you'll go home covered in bream slime and absolutely stinking – but you won't mind!"

THE EDGE

Join top match anglers **Lee Kerry** and **Rob Wootton** each week as they unveil the tactics and techniques that really make a difference

Sussing out how to get Barston's carp to the bottom was the central focus for my practice session.

"KEEP BUSY TO GET CRUISING CARP DOWN TO THE DECK"

THIS WEEK: Rob reveals the tactics he uses to encourage fish to drop lower in the water column

I'VE GOT a few matches pencilled in at the mighty Barston Lakes over the next few weeks, so I decided to have a practice session to get in tune with the venue.

For anyone who is unfamiliar with Barston, it is a large and shallow water, with carp certain to be the main target in the upcoming events.

It was obvious from the moment I arrived that the fish were loving the sunshine, as carp were cruising all over the surface. In all honesty, it wasn't ideal, as the matches are feeder-only!

Getting the fish down to the deck is the number one priority in this scenario, and I managed to work on a few elements that did just that.

LAYING THE TABLE

Fish that are cruising on the surface are more than content to soak up the rays, and therefore you need to give them a very good reason to go down to the lake bottom. With their appetite close to peaking, food is the answer – and plenty of it!

A bait-up feeder is your best friend in this instance, and I'll put a couple filled with corn, hemp and hard pellets in at the start.

I do this with a different rod to what I will fish with, as it makes delivering a heavy feeder a lot easier. I use an 11ft carp rod and spool a mini big pit reel up with 0.16mm or 0.18mm braid and attach the feeder via a clip. Braid has zero stretch, and this ensures accuracy when baiting up.

KEEPING BUSY

That initial hit of bait is a drop in the ocean compared to what else you are going to introduce during the session.

I'm convinced that the carp hear the noise of the feeder landing, see a few loose particles and follow them down before having a few mouthfuls. Within a couple of minutes they've had enough, and rise in the water column to sit shallow again.

It is pointless putting down a huge hit of bait in one go, as they won't sit and graze over it anyway.

The key is to introduce a couple of bait-up feederfuls of bait before each cast, and you must stick to this routine from start to finish if you want to taste success.

QUICK REACTIONS

Once you've dropped a bait-up feederful in, you'll have only a matter of minutes to take advantage of that initial introduction.

I fish a Hybrid feeder over the top, and if this isn't in place quickly, you won't get a bite. Elasticated feeders are permitted at Barston, and this allows me to clip them on and off. I'll load the Hybrid prior to feeding so that I can cast it out within seconds of retrieving the bait-up feeder.

This may only save a matter of seconds but, when time is of the essence, that can make all the difference between getting a wrap-round and the tip not budging.

TACKLING UP

I'm fishing anywhere between 30m and 50m out at this time of year, but I still use a 10lb shockleader. It gives me confidence that I'll never suffer a breakage, and it also allows me to pull that little bit harder, once the carp is close to the net. My mainline is 5lb mono, then comes the shockleader and a 4ins hooklength of 0.18mm to a size 10 Preston Innovations KKH-B hook that is normally baited with a 5mm yellow Dynamite Baits Wowser.

Use a large feeder so that it stands out on the bottom, enhancing the chances of a carp paying it some attention during that brief spell when they are close to it.

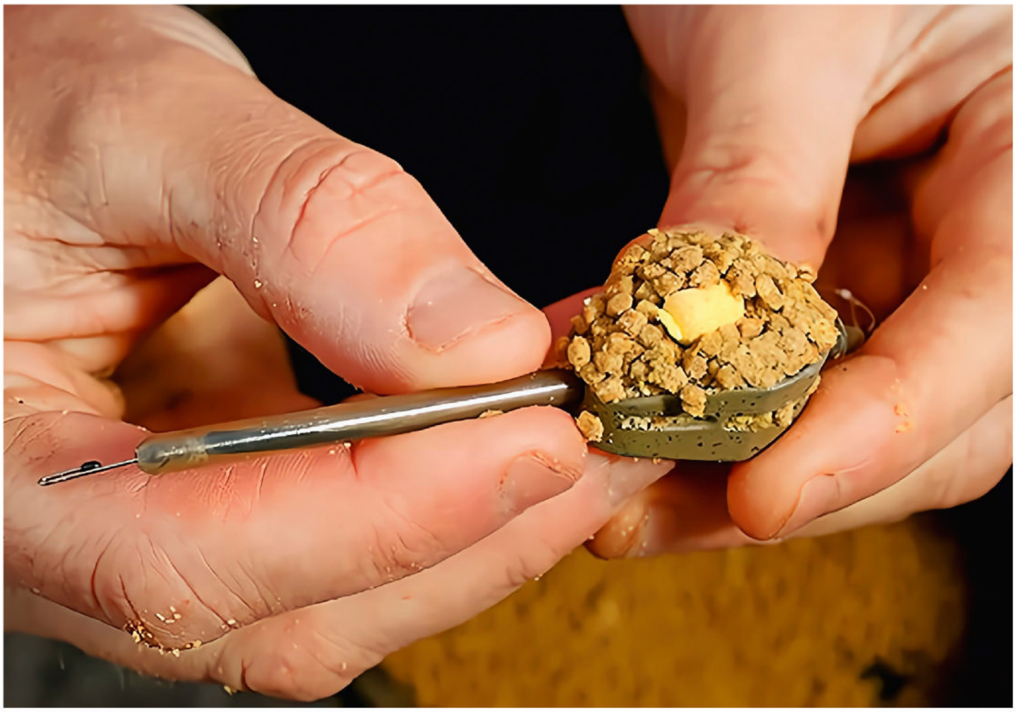
Don't be fooled into thinking the feeder must now take a back seat. Work hard, give the carp a reason to go down to the bottom, and it can still be the most effective tactic in your armoury.

KEY LESSONS

● Mix plenty of hemp and corn together in a tub, but add 6mm and 8mm hard pellets as you go along. The juices from the other ingredients will soon turn them into a mush if you introduce them all to the mix at the start.

● Use distance sticks to clip up the rod that you bait up with and the rod that you fish with. This will make sure that you are dropping your Hybrid directly over the top of the loosefeed every time.

● If you're pleasure fishing, try to select a shallow swim. It's far easier to convince cruising fish to drop to the deck in 5ft of water than it is in a swim that's 10ft deep.



JOIN THE EDGE!

The Edge is an online channel created by Lee and Rob to help them share their winning tactics with viewers. They've filmed hundreds of hours of informative high-quality content, covering a wide range of tactics and styles of venue.

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ASK THE EXPERTS

THE ADVICE YOU NEED TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR FISHING

STEVE RINGER

World Feeder champ and a constantly successful matchman

PAUL GARNER

Angling Times columnist and bait expert

ROCKET FEEDER HELI-RIG

What sort of rig is best for targeting bream that sit at quite long range? I'm not the worlds's best caster!

Bob Harrold, email

A Accuracy and distance are often key requirements when feeder fishing for bream. Certain rigs are better able to deliver this than others.

Arguably the best long-range feeder rig, however, is a Rocket feeder, set up helicopter (or paternoster) style.

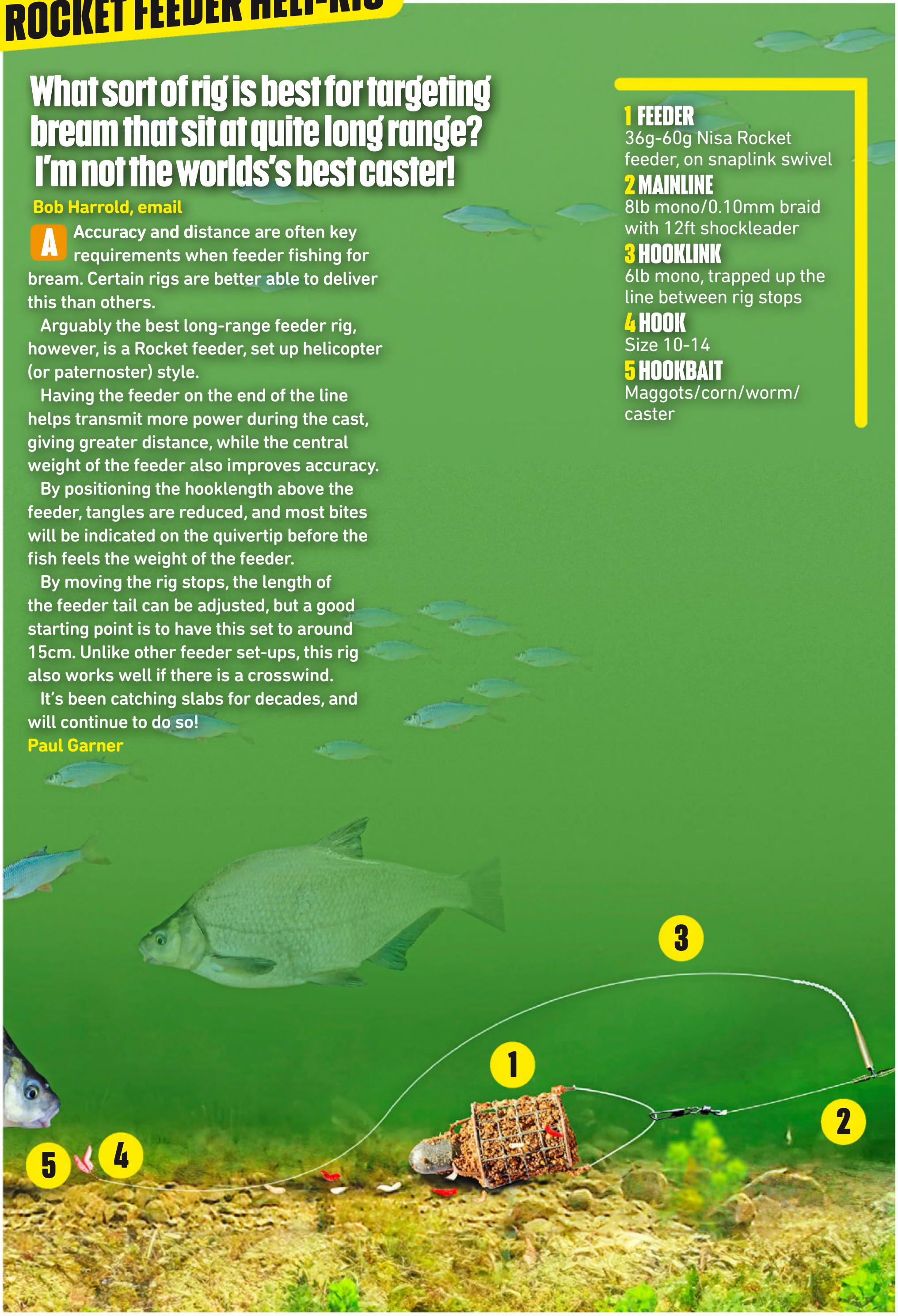
Having the feeder on the end of the line helps transmit more power during the cast, giving greater distance, while the central weight of the feeder also improves accuracy.

By positioning the hooklength above the feeder, tangles are reduced, and most bites will be indicated on the quivertip before the fish feels the weight of the feeder.

By moving the rig stops, the length of the feeder tail can be adjusted, but a good starting point is to have this set to around 15cm. Unlike other feeder set-ups, this rig also works well if there is a crosswind.

It's been catching slabs for decades, and will continue to do so!

Paul Garner



1 FEEDER
36g-60g Nisa Rocket feeder, on snaplink swivel

2 MAINLINE
8lb mono/0.10mm braid with 12ft shockleader

3 HOOKLINK
6lb mono, trapped up the line between rig stops

4 HOOK
Size 10-14

5 HOOKBAIT
Maggots/corn/worm/caster

How far down the margins should I be fishing the pole?

Ray Neston, Brighton

A I always try to fish 5m or more away from where I'm sat, as I always feel that fish feed with more confidence with a decent separation from the angler.

There are, of course, red-letter days when the fish will come closer on a top kit, but these are rare.

My advice would be to begin at 5m and, if you're catching well, feed a metre closer to you, just to see if the fish will move.

Lee Kerry

LEE KERRY

England International and professional angling coach

PAUL HARDY

Match ace who specialises in natural waters

DES SHIPP

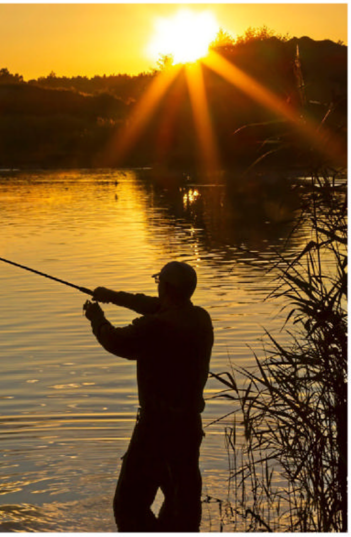
England ace and multiple Parkdean Masters champion

DAI GRIBBLE

Two-time Drennan Cup champion and ace all-rounder

MATT GODFREY

Match fishing ace and former World Youth champion



Will eels feed only at night?

Sam Bowyer, York

A Eels are mainly nocturnal and, although they do sometimes feed early in the morning, I've found darkness to be far better.

The first hour after it has got fully dark is prime time, and if you live close to your water, then short sessions from dusk until midnight are definitely a good idea.

One word on rigs for eels – they have sharp teeth and they can shred line very easily! I use 35lb Gardner Vigilante as a hooklength material, which has a coating to withstand the abrasion.

Dai Gribble

GURU
60g
GURU
45g

How do I plumb up on the waggler?

Harry Bannister, Corby

A A small plummet and a very buoyant float are the bits needed. I'd use a small waggler adaptor and clip on a float that's a lot heavier than the one I'm going to be fishing with.

For example, if I'm planning on using a 3g loaded float to fish with, to plumb up I'll use a 4SSG thick-topped peacock waggler, along with a light 10g plummet.

This light set-up is easy to cast overhead a decent distance around the swim and, being mega-buoyant, the waggler will pop up easily on its own and naturally tighten the line from float to rod for a super-accurate reading of the depth.

Matt Godfrey

8 SIZE
10 SIZE
12 SIZE
14 SIZE
16 SIZE
18 SIZE
PRESTON INNOVATIONS
DURA HOLLO ELASTIC
HIGH PERFORMANCE HOLLOW ELASTIC
HOLLO SIZE 18

Do I need to beef up my pole rigs for stillwater barbel?

Corey Plummer, email

A Barbel will exploit any weakness in your set-up so, provided there aren't lots of snags, I'd use 0.17mm Powerline mainline, a 6ins hooklink of 0.15mm Powerline and a size 14 PR456 hook – a strong carp hook for hit and hold fishing. Your choice of pole elastic is critical.

Purple-grade Dura Hollo, which is around a No12 or No14, is perfect because barbel have tough mouths, and so hook pulls will be minimal.

Des Shipp

What sort of tench spots are best on a natural water?

Kev Norton, email

A It depends on the venue, but in general tench love to live close to snags. It is important to find a spot that is free of weed to help build up a swim.

Before I start a feeder session, I'll cast out a 1.5oz lead and try to feel around for hard spots that are likely to be gravel.

If you feel a distinctive 'donk' once the lead hits the bottom then you've probably found a suitable area to lay down a bit of bait.

On the flip side, if you feel a little resistance before winding in, your rig is likely to have landed in silt or weed, and it's time to explore other areas with the lead.

Paul Hardy

NOW TURN OVER FOR MORE MATCH FISHING WISDOM FROM JAMIE HUGHES AND STEVE RINGER

CHAMP'S DIARY

JAMIE HUGHES GIVES YOU THE INSIDE LINE

A NEAR MISS AND AN EARLY EXIT

I'VE MADE quite a few visits to Partridge Lakes over recent weeks, and my latest match there was for the Golden Reel qualifier.

Peg 73, on Covey Canal Three, wasn't a terrible draw, and the fact that another qualifier had been won from it earlier in the year gave my confidence even more of a boost.

Meat on the short pole and casters over to the far-bank cover was the plan and, kicking off on the latter, I was up to six small F1s in no time at all.

I then gave it a rest and shipped over to the far bank to fish on the bottom in 2ft 6ins of water. It was rigid with F1s, and the float went under every time I dropped the rig in.

They ranged from 6oz to 1lb 8oz, but while I was very busy, I felt there were a few better carp in the area that would be more willing to respond to pellets.

I started another pellet line up close to a far-bank weed bed and, although I had to be patient, each bite resulted in a 3lb-4lb carp.

Rotating the two lines kept me ticking over until the final whistle but, despite my 152lb 15oz putting me in the running, I finished second. Colin Scott fished brilliantly to win from peg 110 on Covey Canal Five, weighing in 169lb 8oz.

I wasn't particularly disappointed, because I'd fished a good match and got lucky by landing a couple of foul-hooked carp.

My next match won't take long to discuss.

I drew peg 46 on Adams, at Hayfield Lakes in the Maver Match This qualifier, took one look at it, and drove straight home without setting up!

I rarely do that, but with 100 anglers fishing and very little space, I knew it would be dire!

RINGER T

CHAMPION ANGLER STEVE TAKES AN

What types of elastic do you favour for your fishing?

Dean Norton, Bath

THE pole elastic market has changed an awful lot recently, and the huge variety on offer can easily cause confusion. Solid elastics used to be the only option, but they've now been joined by hollow and hybrid versions.

They all do a job, and it's important to understand what they bring to the party before deciding which one to use.

This will give you confidence that you've picked the right elastic for what you're trying to achieve.

SOLID ELASTIC

As the name suggests, this is solid, with no inner core. It is still the traditional choice for many anglers, particularly for silverfish work when used in the lighter 2-6 grades.

It's ideal for roach, perch and skimmers on both commercials and natural waters, and it offers good value for money too. A 5m spool, costing less than a fiver, can do a couple of top kits.

It's also durable and lightweight, and the only real drawback with solids is the limited amount of stretch they offer when compared to hollow elastics.

This makes them less suited to big-fish work, where the added stretch of hollows acts as a cushion, allowing you to use lighter lines and relatively fine-wire hooks.

HOLLOW ELASTIC

This type has an inner core that allows for greater stretch and recovery, particularly the liquid-filled versions such as Daiwa Hydrolastic. Hollow elastics can be used for all types of fishing but really come into their own for summer commercial work when targeting carp and F1s.

Ideally, they should be used with a puller-type top kit due to their increased stretch, particularly when trying to gain control of fish under your feet. When combined with a side puller, a light hollow is soft enough to prevent you from bumping small fish, yet it will power up once you use the puller to

O THE RESCUE

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT YOUR ANGLING PROBLEMS

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defeat bigger specimens. It is quite a bit more expensive than a solid version, but it lasts longer. Another slight drawback is that it's a little heavier in the pole, which can make a marginal difference to the balance when fishing at longer lengths.

HYBRID ELASTIC

This combines the properties of both solid and hollow elastics, offering increased stretch and durability.

Like hollow elastic, it is ideal for anglers who target a mix of fish sizes and want one solution to cover them all.

It has gained in popularity due to a balance between affordability and performance. If you have only a few top kits, this is a good choice for many angling scenarios. It lasts well, but it is a bit heavier than a traditional solid.

PERSONAL CHOICES

Over the years I have made several changes to the elastics I use, and right now, I rely on a mixture of the three I have already mentioned.

I'm a massive fan of Hydrolastic, and I use it in several grades.

Pink (4-6) is perfect for F1s in winter, while a blue (5-8) or white (6-10) is more suitable in the warmer months.

The latter is also my mixed bag elastic, and I'd feel confident landing everything from a big skimmer to a bonus 10lb carp with it.

I also have top kits fitted with a grade 8-10 hybrid for this style of fishing.

Black Hydrolastic is rated 12-16 and helps me to beat carp when fishing in snag-free swims, whereas red (16-20) is my top choice when the fish average over 8lb, or I am targeting the margins.

Solid elastic comes into play for my roach and skimmer work, typically with grades five or six.

CREATING THE CONNECTION

I use a Guru Dacron connector to join the elastic to the rig, but I remove the Dacron and just use the bead.

I thread the bead on to the elastic, then tie an overhand knot in the end. To attach my rig, I have a loop in the line which I push the mainline through to create a noose.

I then put this over the elastic, tighten and pull up the elastic so it grips behind the knot. To make sure it stays in place, I pull the bead up over the knot.

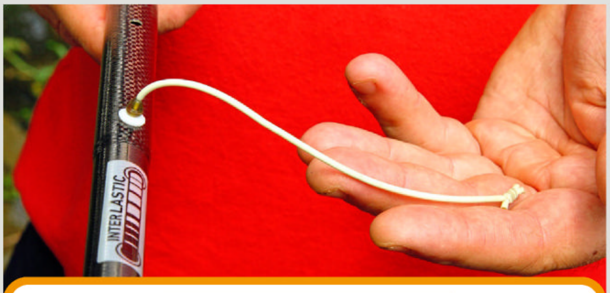
This is a simple and effective way to attach a rig, and it never tangles. The heavier the elastic in use, the bigger the bead needs to be so that it sits snugly over the knot to keep everything in place.

> "Solid elastic comes into play for my roach and skimmer work"

3 STEPS TO SUCCESS

USE LUBRICATION

Your elastic will zip through your top kit without any interruptions if it's lubricated. You can buy specialist lubricants for the job, or even use a blend of washing-up liquid and water that is squirted into the top kit before the start of each session.



VARY THE TENSION

A bead that traps the elastic on your puller kit will allow you to dictate the tension of your elastic. Set it quite tight when you need to take control of a fight immediately, and slacken it off if you are fishing in open water and want the fish to exit the target zone quickly once hooked.

CHECK THE STRENGTH RATING

Always check the rating of the pole and top kits before elasticating them. Using an elastic that is too heavy could lead to breakages if the wall strength of the sections isn't sufficient to deal with the pressure that will be applied when the elastic is under tension from a fighting fish.

BAIT CLINIC

DR PAUL GARNER

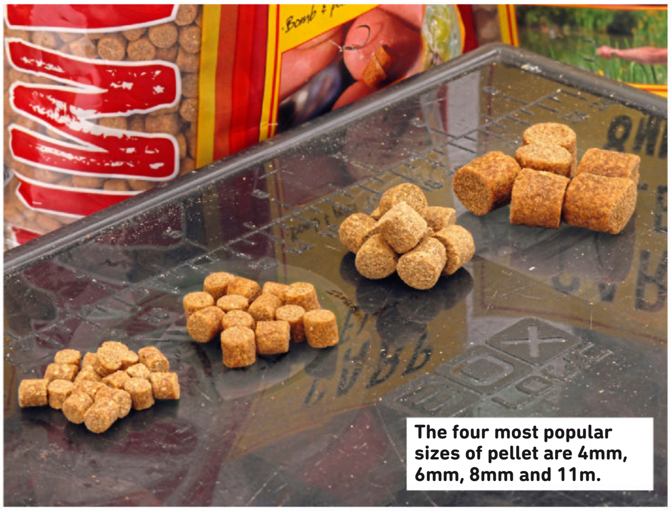
Honest advice to help you to catch more fish on every trip, without breaking the bank

THE POWER OF PELLETS

These tips will help you get more from what are easy-to use, effective and brilliant baits

PELLETS have to be among the most readily available and user-friendly baits around.

No matter whether you are fishing natural or commercial fisheries, pellets are likely to form part of your bait selection, especially at this time of the year. Not all pellets are the same, though, and it's important to understand the pros and cons of each, to ensure you get the best results.



The four most popular sizes of pellet are 4mm, 6mm, 8mm and 11m.

PELLET COMPOSITION

Most pellets that we commonly use for fishing started out being developed to feed fish on fish farms.

These could be carp and other coarse fish, but could just as easily be trout, salmon, halibut, or a whole host of other, more exotic, species.

Each species of fish requires a slightly different combination of protein, fat, and carbohydrate levels, along with trace vitamins and minerals, to sustain it. Even different sizes of the same species often thrive best on slightly different feeds.

The requirement to minimise cost, and waste, also influences the ingredients used. Of course, these specifications effect the characteristics of each pellet, and its usefulness as a bait.

Fortunately, bait companies have trialled and selected many different pellets that are not only effective, but easy to use. Some, such as halibut pellets, have a high oil and protein content, making them attractive, but are best used in small quantities.

Coarse pellets, on the other hand, are lower in nutrients, and a perfect match to the nutritional needs of carp.

Should we be worried about the attractiveness of our pellets? I would say no, as the differences between pellets are relatively minor.

> “If you want your bait to get down fast, then up the pellet size”

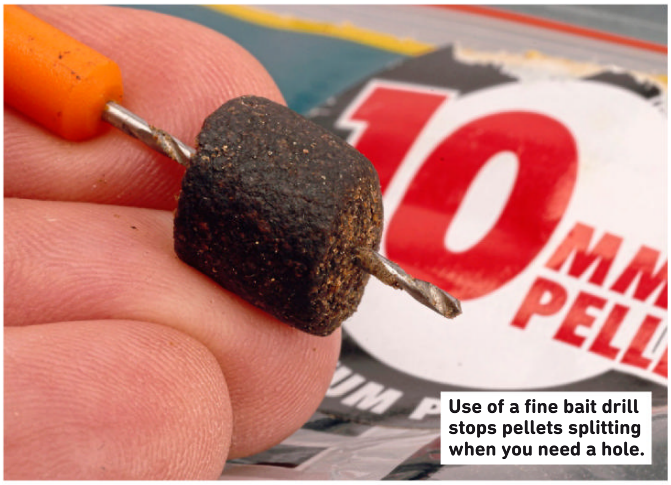
Pellets are a highly effective, user-friendly bait for most species.

QUICK TIP

WHEN using small pellets, dampen them with a sprinkling of water before use. This helps them to cut through the surface film and sink faster.

6MM
Bomb & pellet · Pellet waggler · Spod & bag mix
EVOLUTION
CRAB EXTRACT
PVA FRIENDLY
ADD TO SPOD & MIXES OR COAT BOILIES

A teaspoonful of Crab Extract gives pellets an instant flavour hit.



Use of a fine bait drill stops pellets splitting when you need a hole.

Attraction comes in many forms, such as the sound of bait hitting the water and the spread of bait on the bottom, not just taste and nutritional value. We can very easily add extra attractors to pellets, if this becomes neccesary.

SIZE AND SINK RATE

I think a decent starting point is to use the smallest pellets that you can feed accurately, and which match the size of the hookbait. My thinking is that there is less chance of overfeeding when using smaller baits, allowing you to feed more regularly and encourage the fish to feed. In the margins this could mean starting with 4mm pellets, switching to 6mm, and finally 8mm when feeding at range with a catapult.

The size of the fish you are targeting also influences the choice of pellet size. Bigger fish allow you to think about using bigger pellets, especially if you are being pestered by small stuff.

Another factor to take into account is that small pellets sink slower than larger ones. If you want your bait to get down fast, perhaps in a deep swim, then upping the pellet size can be a wise move.

The opposite is true if you want to encourage fish up in the water. For example, when fishing the pellet waggler, don't automatically reach for 8mm pellets when a 6mm bait will reach the distance.

IS EXTRA ATTRACTION NEEDED?

I've spent hundreds of days working with top-flight match and specialist anglers, and opinions are mixed as to whether extra attraction makes any difference. I think a lot will depend on how many feeding fish you have in the swim. If you are getting regular bites, there is probably little to gain from extra attraction. But if bites are infrequent, especially in winter, or on natural venues, then boosting pellets can help draw fish in.

Many pellets are available ready flavoured, and Krill, The Source, and belachan-flavoured baits are great at this time of year. If you want to try flavouring your own pellets, use a liquid food additive and start with just a teaspoonful per pint of pellets.

SPECIALIST PELLETS

Several other types of pellet are available for specific purposes. Floating pellets are really useful for surface fishing for carp and rudd, and can often also be used as soft expanders, too.

Breakdown pellets have rather fallen our of favour in recent years, but are still a useful bait to keep in mind.

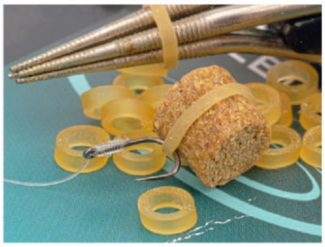
These pellets are designed to break down quickly in water, leaving tiny particles and releasing their attraction quickly. Easy to spod, with no mess, they are a great way to kick-start your swim when mixed with normal pellets and boilies.

The other 'pellets' that you will come across are hardened hookbaits. Often, these aren't pellets at all, but boiled baits made to replicate pellets especially for the hook.

These often have slightly different properties to real pellets, making them well worth having with you.

Pellets seem, on the face of it, to be such a simple bait, but there are still a lot of areas where you can improve your catches by choosing the correct bait for the job.

Right through the year, no matter the species, I will have them with me.



The easiest way to hook hard pellets is with a bait band.

DURABLE HOOKERS
6M

Hookable pellets are handy to use alongside hard feed pellets.

Flavoured pellets can bring more bites when the fishing is tough.

TIME TO EXPLOIT THE POST-SPAWNING FEED-UP!

With the annual ritual behind them, carp are hungry, and on the hunt for food. **Adam Penning** shows how to take full advantage of the best big-hit window of the year...

BY THE time we get into June, carp on most waters will already have spawned.

The biggest event in their life will naturally have a big impact on their behaviour immediately after, and affect how we plan our angling.

Most, if not all the carp will be down in weight, and sometimes lacking condition too. If they have plenty of nice soft weed to roll around in, then usually any damage will be minimal or even non-existent. But if, through a lack of weed, the carp have had to carry out their ritual in a harsher environment (reed stems, gravel beds and so on), then they could have minor abrasions and even the odd lifted scale.

What does all this mean to the angler? Well, it's good news, because post-spawning carp are hungry carp!

Rarely caught, big old fish won't do a capture at all in the months leading up to spawning. But once the act is over, that all changes – the fish need to supplement weight and condition loss, and that can only be done by increasing what they eat.

Some can lose more than 20 per cent of their body mass, and will be aiming to replace that as quickly as possible.

Very often, when disseminating advice though *Carp Academy*, I am keen to major on using just enough bait to get a bite. That might be 20 boilies or, in some cases, much less... it might be a PVA bag or maybe just six medium-sized Spombs.

> "Post-spawning carp have shown a strong preference for a particle-based approach"

Summer is the ideal time for oily trout pellets.

Add hemp juice to the pellets to soften them.

The key is generally not to overdo it, contradicting the common mindset which seems to be that the more bait you apply, the more fish will be caught.

Almost always it's better to start lean – simply try to catch a single carp and then take it from there.

Post-spawning, this scenario changes on a lot of waters, and now is the best time of year to think about applying bait in a more proactive way.

Post-spawning carp have shown a strong preference for a particle-based approach and, of course, it's no secret that adding lots of salt to the mix will increase the attraction exponentially.

My personal favourite is freshly cooked hempseed – I really don't think there's anything better, although friends of mine also rate things like Haith's Red Band (pigeon conditioner seed mix). For me it's hemp, and a 20kg sack from somewhere like Copdock Mill will only cost about 40 quid. Once cooked it will double in weight, making it a very good investment – a great choice for those on a budget.

You can use this on its own, and it is extremely effective, but if you decide to add salt then add it on the day you are fishing, as the salt will tend to cause the inner and the outer husk to separate over time.

Rock or sea salt is the best choice – avoid Saxo! In terms of quantity, as much as half a kilo per bucket is fine.

One of my favourite tricks it to take the oily juices from the freshly cooked hemp and use these to dampen some trout pellets. After a good blanching, I can mix in some hemp and squeeze it all together to make lovely hemp and pellet balls which are really deadly. In the height of summer there's little to beat oily hemp and trout pellets.

For the hookbait, something like a Krill dumbell is a great choice and, of course, if you want to also add broken boilies or corn, it can only help! If you add corn, then a couple of plastic grains also make a superb hookbait.

When it comes to location, look for carp in areas where the weed is thickest. Alternatively, if you are fishing a lake without weed, then I'd always check the areas where the wind is blowing into first.

The golden rule is to be at the lake early, as carp activity will often dissipate as the morning progresses, particularly on bright, sunny days. If you have found the carp, and your lake has a decent stock, then something like 15 large Spombs should get a reaction.

Alternatively, for fishing in close, simply squeeze and ball the mix in! Happy hunting… post-spawning is a great time to be carp fishing!

Hemp is excellent for baiting heavily.

MORE INFO

For more no-nonsense carp-catching tactical advice from Adam Penning, check out the 'Penning's Carp Academy' channel:

SCAN THE QR CODE

NEW SERIES ASK HOLMESY

A 50lb-plus Yorkshire common from a deep gravel pit where finding a shallow spot proved key.

UPPING THE PRESSURE

Mark Holmes explains how to tailor your approach according to the air pressure

Q: I've seen one of your shows when you talked about air pressure being vitally important. Would you explain this in a little more detail, and are high pressure conditions in fact a waste of time?

John Osborne, Telford

A: This is quite a complicated issue and, if I were to answer it scientifically, you'd probably fall asleep!

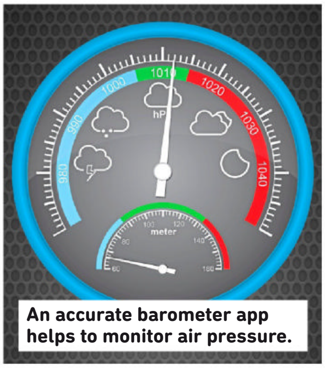
The one thing I always say about collecting data during my fishing trips is that even after studying results measured against the scientific conditions (air and water temperature, wind direction, air pressure etc), they have never stopped me going or trying. That would be the first gilt-edged comment – don't let ANY seemingly unfavourable conditions stop you from going. You've always got a chance with a line in the water... unlike if you're just sitting at home waiting for favourable conditions!

The one thing I see all the time is anglers not understanding what is classed as high and low pressure. Most would say anything less than 1000mpb is low, when the classification for low air pressure is in fact 1015mpb or below.

My experiences have taught me that sudden changes in air pressure are more symptomatic of affecting your chances. In layman's terms this means that, just as

> "Modern carp techniques are very orientated to bottom baits"

Changing cloud patterns should be noted, as they signify the quick air pressure drops that induce carp to feed.



An accurate barometer app helps to monitor air pressure.

a cold snap takes a while for fish to readjust and start feeding freely again, the same is true of high air pressure increases. We've had a bout of high air pressure over the UK during spring for nigh on three months. If high air pressure stopped fish feeding we wouldn't have caught anything. But it certainly has affected results.

The fish take four or five days to readjust to air pressure increases whereas, if there is a drop in air pressure, the carp will immediately feed more enthusiastically.

The important thing to remember is that air pressure affects the carp's swim bladder. If it's high, it tends to force them up in the water.

That doesn't mean that they aren't feeding up in the higher layers of the water column, it's just that modern carp techniques are very heavily orientated to bottom baits. Of course, low air pressure forces the carp down to feed on the bottom of the lake. That increases takes and catches, as that's where our baits and rigs are. Simple, but not helpful if the pressure becomes high.

You could simply start fishing up in the water column with zigs, or you could floatfish during the day up in the water. I personally think the link with air pressure is also due to the general increase in oxygen associated with low-pressure fronts. These increases are stimulated by rainfall and more windy conditions, particularly SW winds.

The reason this spring was so poor was because the air pressures were high and the predominant cold winds were northerly and easterly but, more importantly, light in strength. This kept oxygen levels stable, but there was not the sudden increase that you get with low pressure.

Finally, one point I would make is that if high air pressure continues, I have found shallow lakes to be the least affected. Waters no deeper than 6ft are nowhere near as poor as lakes that are 25ft-plus in parts. These deeper venues have different oxygen pockets, water temperature levels and pressure differences within the water column.

As always, I will try to finish off with an example for you to draw reference from.

Five years ago I decided to target a large Yorkshire common carp rumoured to be over 50lb – a giant in the UK but a monster in frozen Yorkshire. The lake was a large gravel pit with depths of more than 40ft. In those conditions I knew high air pressure would be a factor as to where that carp would swim, lay up and feed.

Having said that shallow lakes aren't that badly affected by fluctuations in air pressure, my mind was made up to target water of less than 10ft. There were two ways I could do that – the simple way, fishing in the edge or, finding shallower water further out.

The problem with fishing in the edge was, this was a busy, day-ticket water with people walking up and down all day, not giving a fig about stealth.

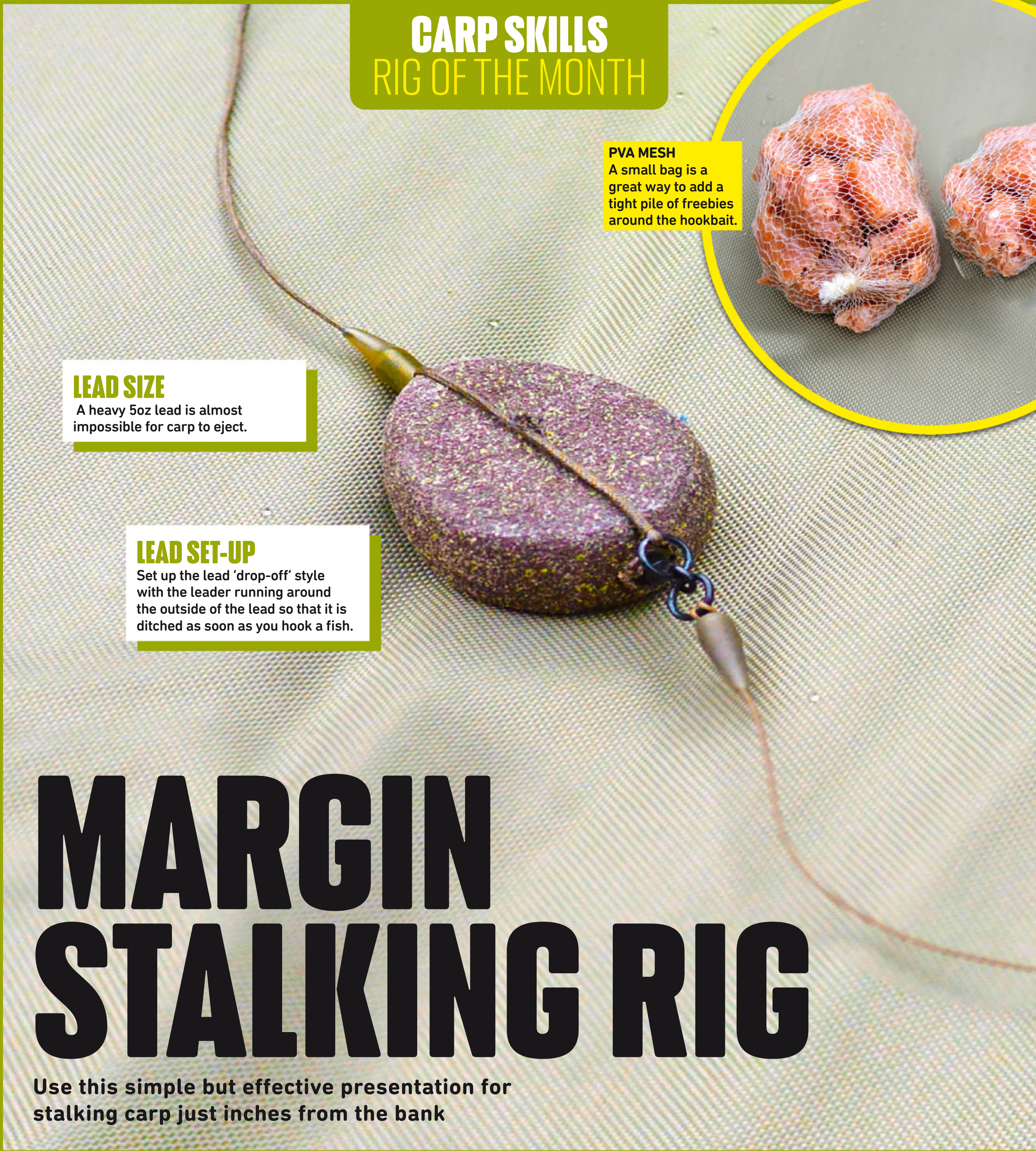
So, after much marker float work, I found a small plateau where the water came up from 18ft to 9ft. This area was flat, and within 60 yards casting range. After a couple of sessions with all three rods on this spot, a bite resulted in something plodding off and feeling rather large.

As I hoisted it on to the scales, and the needle bounced round to 50lb 13oz of Yorkshire common carp, I had a smile as wide as the lake itself. It was caught when the air pressure was classed as high, standing at 1020mbp. Job done.

I knew that – despite the high air pressure – the fish would still feed.

Careful marker work is needed to find the depth fluctuations that matter in times of high air pressure.

CARP SKILLS
RIG OF THE MONTH



PVA MESH
A small bag is a great way to add a tight pile of freebies around the hookbait.

LEAD SIZE
A heavy 5oz lead is almost impossible for carp to eject.

LEAD SET-UP
Set up the lead 'drop-off' style with the leader running around the outside of the lead so that it is ditched as soon as you hook a fish.

MARGIN STALKING RIG

Use this simple but effective presentation for stalking carp just inches from the bank

EXHILARATING is the only way to describe stalking carp in the margins. If you've never done it before, make it your mission to complete this summer.

Watching a carp slip up on your carefully positioned trap cannot be beaten. Fishing close in also enables you to get away with using presentations that you wouldn't necessarily be able to cast any further.

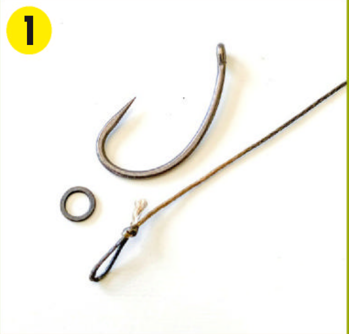
The rig we've detailed this month features a 5oz inline lead which you would struggle to cast with all but the heaviest of rods.

For dropping next to a marginal bush or reeds, though, it's ideal. Carp simply can't deal with leads of this weight. Coupled with the short hooklink of 4ins-5ins, a fish will come into contact with the full weight of the lead as soon as it picks up the hookbait. At this point it's game over for the carp!

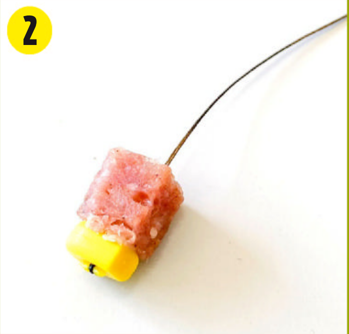
A large lump of tungsten putty also ensures that the hook will drop down in the carp's mouth, further stacking the odds in your favour. It's important to set up the lead 'drop-off' style so

> **"A fish will come into contact with the full weight of the lead as soon as it picks up the hookbait"**

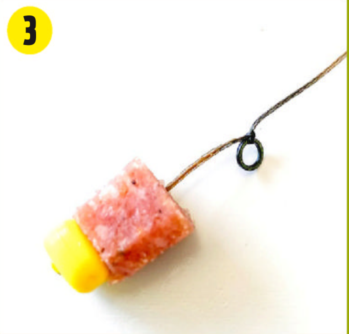
HOW TO TIE A MARGIN STALKING RIG



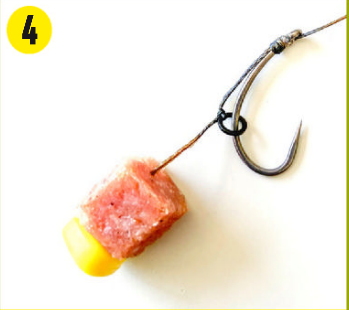
1 Take a length of 20lb supple braid and tie a small loop in one end.



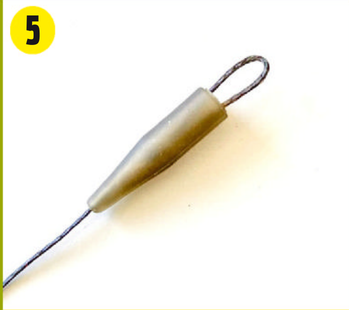
2 Skin a 1cm cylinder of Peperami and thread it on with a piece of fake corn.



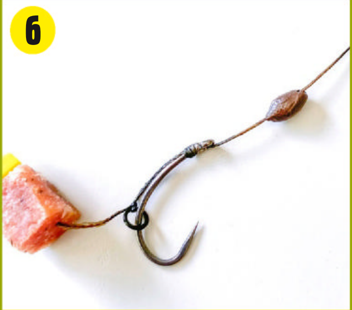
3 Tie on a rig ring, positioned around 1cm from the top of the Peperami.



4 Position the ring opposite the barb. Secure with a five-turn knotless knot.

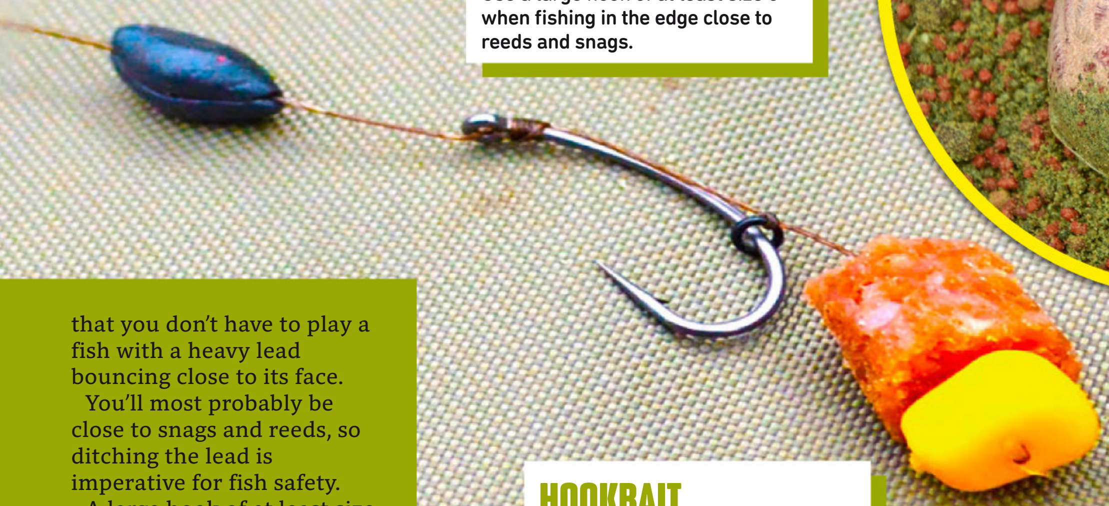


5 Add anti-tangle sleeve. Tie a figure of eight loop in the end of the hooklink.



6 Complete the rig by adding a blob of tungsten putty just above the hook.

SOLID BAGS
If you're worried about light weed in the edge, place the rig inside a solid PVA bag.



PUTTY

A large lump of tungsten putty keeps the hooklink pinned down and helps to pull the hook down into the carp's bottom lip.

HOOK

Use a large hook of at least size 6 when fishing in the edge close to reeds and snags.

HOOKBAIT

An oily piece of Peperami makes a great stalking bait, and tipping it with a piece of fake corn adds visual attraction.

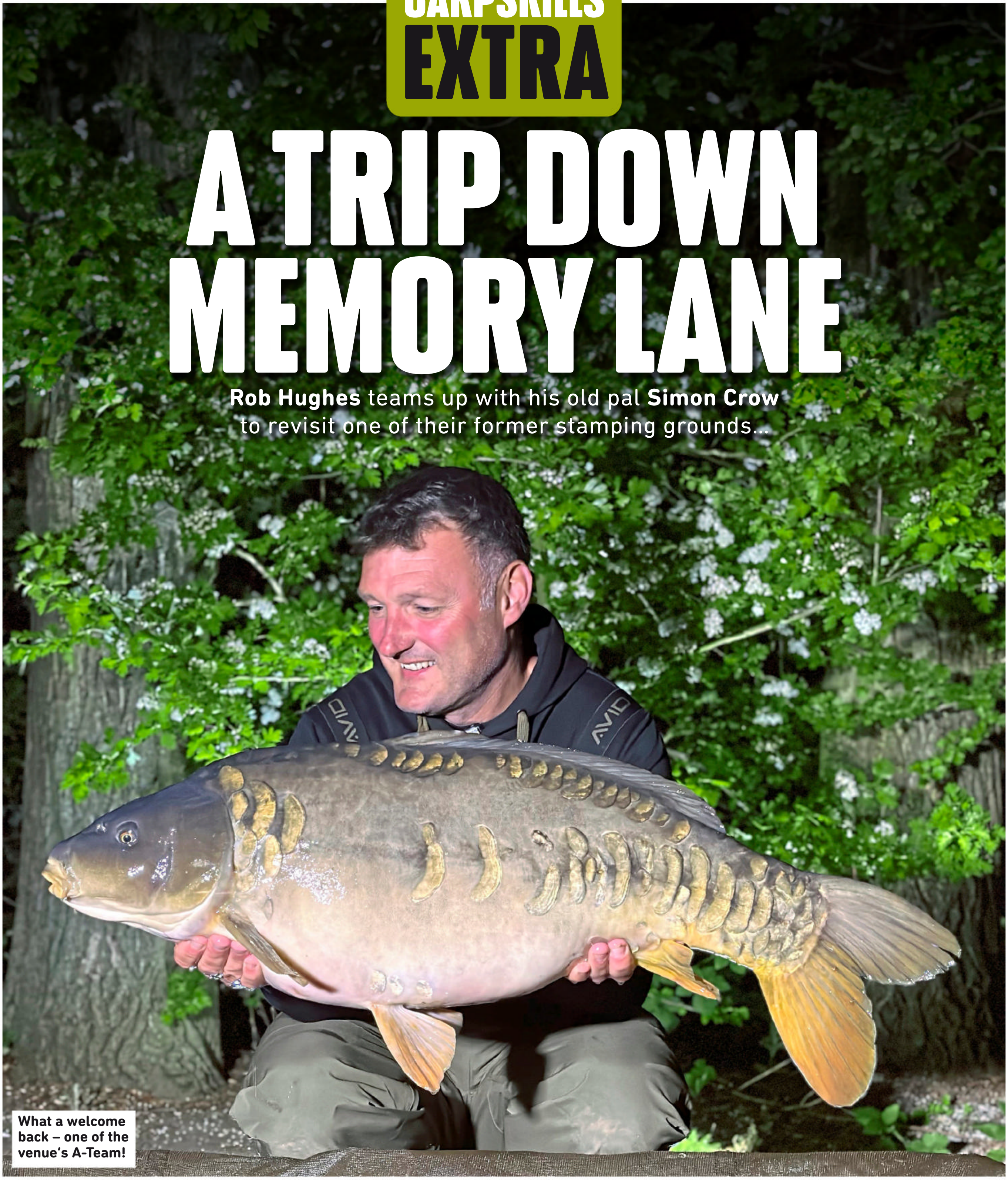
that you don't have to play a fish with a heavy lead bouncing close to its face.

You'll most probably be close to snags and reeds, so ditching the lead is imperative for fish safety.

A large hook of at least size 6 and a 20lb hooklink are also advisable, as you could find yourself in a hit-and-hold situation where strong gear is required.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Rob Hughes teams up with his old pal **Simon Crow** to revisit one of their former stamping grounds...



What a welcome back – one of the venue's A-Team!

IF YOU read my *Hughes Views* column in the main paper, you'll know that a few weeks ago I announced that me and my long-time angling partner Simon Crow had 'got the band back together'.

We go back a long way, back to the 1990s in fact when, as a trainee solicitor who had moved to a new town, I went into a tackle shop to buy a rod licence, and behind the counter was a lad about my age. We immediately hit it off.

He got me a place on a syndicate he fished, and I introduced him to fishing in France. For a decade or so we had loads of adventures, travelling all over the world together fishing for carp and, ultimately, we ended up fishing for our country and winning the inaugural World Cup in 1996.

Work, marriage, family and life took us to opposite ends of the country, so naturally we drifted apart. I was really chuffed when carp brand AVID recently asked me to join their team. Crowie is their senior consultant, so not only would I return to product development and brand promotions, but I'd get to fish with him again.

Back in the day, our first mag feature and first UK film were made at Sapphire Lakes in Nottinghamshire, so we thought it was only right that we should re-visit for our first AVID trip together.

I hadn't been there since 1997, and it's changed a fair

WELCOME TO
PHIRE LAKES

Where could be better to fish with my old mate Crowie?

bit. Nathan, the current owner, is a time-served fishery manager and has made a really good job of tidying it up.

When I last fished there, a 'twenty' was a good fish. There's now a good head of them, and a handful of fast-growing good-looking 30-pounders as well.

Whenever we fished a new lake we always used to walk round, irrespective of what the time was. Usually we would both want the same swim so, when Simon arrived and we had our walk around, it was exactly the same.

We both wanted swim four – it fished to an island and a bank with no pegs on. Swim five opposite fished to the other side of the same island and the same bank, but was only available for the first 24 hours of our trip. There were fish there, too, so Crowie jumped into swim five and I grabbed four.

I must confess to being a little under-prepped for this trip, as I'd just changed over my kit to the new AVID stuff and was still finding my feet.

Crowie had come straight from another session, so his gear was ready and he was quick out of the traps. I was still tying rigs when I looked up and saw him playing one!

After a good hour of faffing I was eventually ready to get the rods out. You're allowed bait boats at Sapphire, and knowing everyone would be using them, I dusted off my ageing craft. Out went a handful of corn and bits with a 14mm pink pop-up over the top, fished on a Ronnie rig.

Within 10 minutes it was off. And then off again, and again. All on the same spot to the corner of the island.

There were two islands to my left and a hefty overhanging tree line behind the island that looked like it would hold fish. It was not in my water, though – that was the divider to Crowie's bit.

There was, however, a small clump of reeds in my bit and that looked like it would offer a better and safer line.

It would be a case of hook-and-hold, but I got the rods out ready for dark.

Just into dark, and the left rod pulled up tight. Clearly, the fish wanted to get back into the trees and, despite me holding on tight, it took me around the back of the island.

I could feel the line grating on the trees as I held on for dear life. All the fish so far had been doubles. This one clearly wasn't. It turned out of the tree branches, then I could feel the line rubbing on the reeds on the island.

I eased it begrudgingly back towards me but, as soon as it was clear, it decided to shoot further down to the left behind the other island. I put a hefty amount of right-hand strain on, and had to coax it though the reeds and around the gravel island.

Stood in the same spot where we made our first film, 30 years ago.

I was sure it was going to fall off, but everything held. Over the net cord it went and, in the torchlight, we could see it was one of the A-Team. A decent thirty, and a new Sapphire PB for me.

I didn't fish that night and reeled the other rods in to leave the swim rested after the fight. My hope was that there were a few fish in the area and that they would settle and feed in the day.

The plan worked, as the action started straight away.

Crowie nabbed a few more, then came over to fish my side of the lake for a social.

In closing, I'll just repeat what I said in my *Hughes Views* column. If you've got an old pal that you haven't fished with for a while, give him a call and arrange a session. You won't regret it.

The action came thick and fast!

> **"In the torchlight we could see that it was one of the A-Team. A decent thirty and a new Sapphire PB for me..."**

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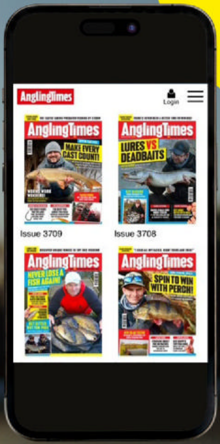
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OUR MAN ON THE BANK

DES TAYLOR

A nice perch from a past opening day.

"I'm ready to hit the river running – how about you?"

Come midnight on June 16 I'll be making my first cast

WOW, this has been the hottest spring spell for quite a few years. To all those anglers who said they'd get out there if only it would stop raining for a few weeks I say, well, your wish has come true.

I just hope that it doesn't rain hard just before the start of the river season because the ground is that hard, the water will just run over the dry earth and we'll get flash floods. That would be a disaster for river anglers and the tackle shops.

I do wish the Angling Trust and the Angling Trade Association would get their act together and give the majority of coarse anglers what they want, which is no closed season at all.

The last poll on the topic proved this, and yet we still have to go through the annual pain of not being able to fish our rivers when they are at their best. The closed season is suicide for the coarse fishing community, yet it's people who know very little about the sport outside their office window, not us, who make the rules.

But no matter what, I'll be out on the banks of the Warwickshire Avon from 6pm on June 15, getting my bivvy set up, baiting up, then eating a curry and chips with my mate Wayne, all ready to make the first cast at midnight sharp.

Then the next day Wayne and I will jump in the boat and go wherever the fancy takes us, fishing for anything that swims using float, leger, livebait or lure. We don't care what species, or what size.

Then it'll be back to the bivvy at nightfall for a glass of red and a pizza, after which we'll settle down for another session after barbel.

Come daylight, we'll be back on the boat until dinner time, hopefully meeting up with fellow boating friends along the way. After that I'll be homeward-bound, for on the 17th I have a guide day on the Severn – life's busy, and that's how I like it.

If the weather stays as it is, it will then be early morning or late evening fishing for tench, crucians and carp, making sure I'm not on the bank when the hot sun is high in the sky. Don't get me wrong, you can still catch in red-hot temperatures, but it knocks me about far too much these days.

It's effort that catches the fish, and many's the time I've walked to my swim in darkness or left it before sun-up. You need to be dedicated to be up and out the house by 3am, and it helps if you have understanding neighbours!

This is a magical time of year for us anglers, with free-biting fish and nature really up to speed now.

So many times, as I drive to a venue, walk to a swim or sit down making ready to cast, I take a moment out and think to myself: "You know what, Des, at this precise moment you're the luckiest bloke in the world!"

Fishing's a great sport, so get out there and enjoy it.

Meeting fellow boat anglers on opening day is all part of the buzz.

Angling Times

YOUR FISHING WEEK

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TIME FOR A RETHINK ON KRILL?

I AM increasingly concerned about the use of krill-based bait in fishing.

This is an issue that has been brought into sharper focus by the recent Oceans documentary presented by Sir David Attenborough.

The programme highlights the alarming impact of industrial krill fishing in the Southern Ocean, drawing attention to the vital role these tiny crustaceans play in Antarctic ecosystems.

Krill are the cornerstone of the food web, sustaining whales, seals, penguins and countless seabirds.

The removal of krill on an industrial scale risks destabilising this fragile ecological balance.

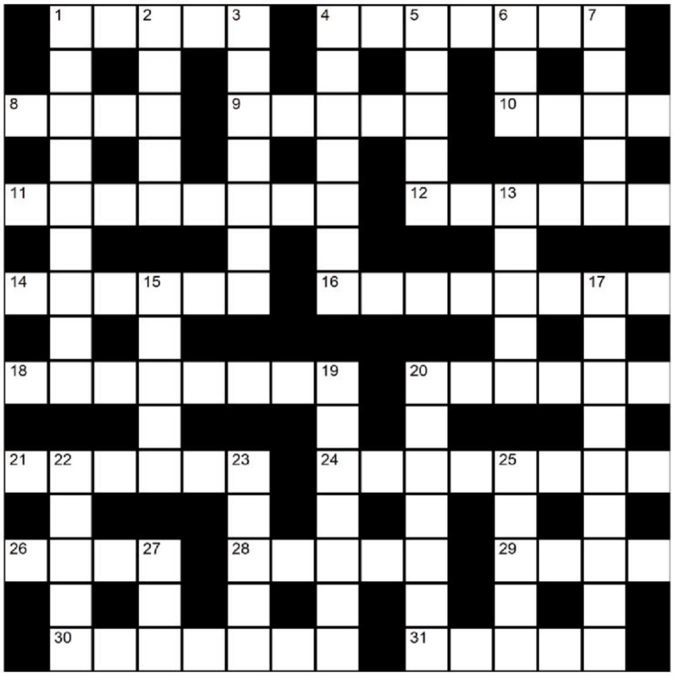
As someone who fishes out of passion and respect for nature, I find it difficult to justify the environmental cost of using krill-based bait.

If there are more sustainable alternatives available, then I believe it's time for the angling community to lead by example in choosing them.

Ben Sockett, email

Do we need to find more sustainable krill alternatives?

THE ANGLER'S CROSSWORD



(* indicates an anagram)

ACROSS

1 Prepare a fly (5)
4 White-capped World champ legend, MBE holder (3,4)
8 A lollipop float is ___ not globe-shaped (4)
9 East Lothian beach, __ Sands (*stone) (5)
10 Trout fly, __ weevil (*live) (4)
11 Braid, say, to which hooklength is attached (8)
12 ___ Arpad, Golden Rod Feeder champ 2025 (*if a ban) (6)
14 Nickname of banjo feeder inventor, Andy Findlay (*hit fen) (3,3)
16 Our annual ___ Angling Awards started in 2024 (8)
18 Percy ___1970s cigar-smoking, angling giant, died 2006 (*Senor Dan) (8)
20 Cure, solution (6)
21 Unmoving, like bait fished on the deck (*cast it) (6)
24 Sort of hook best used for sweetcorn (4,4)
26/2dn. Notts. stretch of the Trent for big barbel (*lagoon net) (4,5)
28 Odour... of some gar, Omagh (5)
29 Small, long-tailed amphibian (4)
30 Gareth ___ Reel Elite Masters Grand finalist, 2024 (*melt bar) (7)
31 Dissuade ... in lakeside terrace (5)

DOWN

1 Brown trout variety native to N.Ireland (*had gallon) (9)
2 See 26ac.
3 Time spent angling, say (7)
4 Brown marsh bird, heron relative (7)
5 Scottish resort... in Oban – f-fantastic! (5)
6 N. Yorks river that becomes the Ouse (3)
7 Tackle giant, sponsor of Pole Fishing Masters (5)
13 Rapid growth of algae on water's surface (5)
15 __ Lagoon at Chesil Beach, bass and bream nursery (5)
17 2024 finalist in Fish O'Mania/Maver Match This/Golden Reel (pond weary) (4,5)
19 Isle of Wight town on River Medina (7)
20 ___ Lake, Staffs reservoir fed by River Dane (*ray rudd) (7)
22 Trail bait from moving boat (5)
23 Long-legged, long-necked bird; lifting device (5)
25 Nut-based pellet... from sago, nutritious (5)
27 Power __; rubbery line for e.g. grippy stop knots (3)

Solutions to May 27, 2025 crossword
Across: 1 Lead free 6 Cubes 9 PTFE 10 Top up 11 Loop 12 Swingers 13 Flanks 14 Witney 16 Dynamite 18 Texas rig 23 Whales 25 Backlead 27 Crow 28 Lloyd 29 Sort 30 Thyme 31 Spraying.
Down: 2 Esthwaite 3/6 Drennan Cup 4 Retie 5 Exposed 7 Bale arm 8/21 Shock leader 13 Final 15 Yorks 17 The Warren 19 Alloway 20 Gibbons 22 Arlesey 24 Hurst 26 Cedar 28 Lie.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Ella Justo
26lb silvers bag, Float Fish Farm, Peterborough, maggots

Phoebe Clark
7lb common carp, Dromonby Pond, Yorkshire, sweetcorn

Jake Airey
6lb 1oz common carp, Renny Lake, Yorkshire, Spam

SEND IN YOUR PICTURES

Email us your child's details, including their name, the weight of the fish, where and how they caught it, along with a photograph, to **kingfisherclub @anglingtimes.co.uk**

- Open to children up to 16.

Lucas Burt
6lb 1oz mirror carp, Renny Lake, Yorkshire, Spam

Joe Davis
17lb 7oz common carp, Arrow Valley Lake, Redditch, wafter

Max Walker
6lb mirror carp, Northmoor Fisheries, Lincolnshire, meat

Jacob Partlett
Bream, Pin Hole, sweetcorn

Evelyn Hayden
Common carp, Wold Farm Fishery, Northants, wafter

Ciaran David Dicker
Eel, River Lea Navigation, London, maggot

Arthur O'Malley
Barbel, Whitmore Fisheries, Kirkham, Lancs, sweetcorn

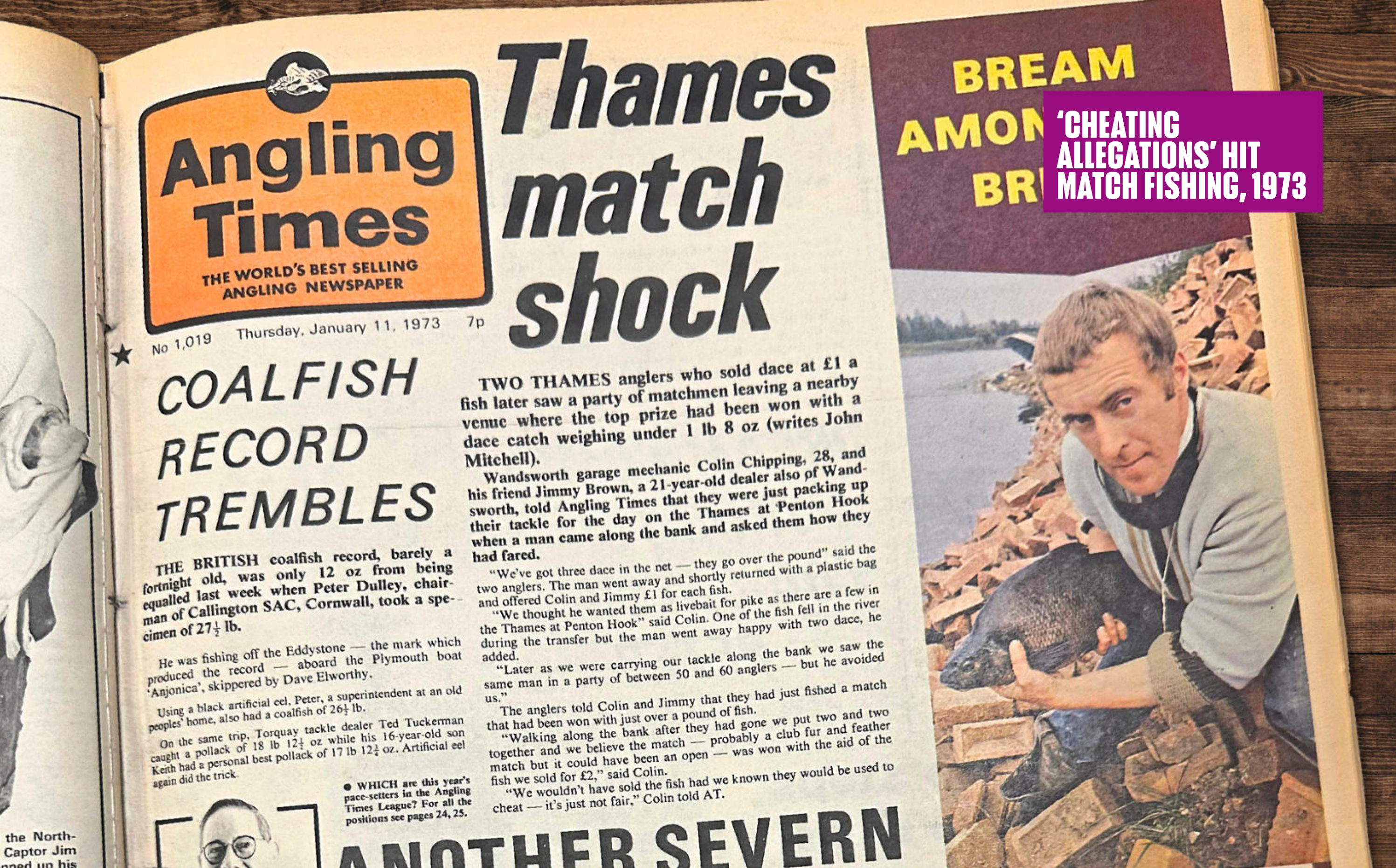
Jude Flemming
Bream, Whinwhistle Fishery, Romsey, Hampshire

George Porter
Crucian carp, local club lake, Essex, maggot

Theodor Cartledge
Mirror carp, Yew Tree Fishery, Wirral, Method feeder

Joshua Newby
8lb 5oz mirror carp, Linear Fisheries, Oxford, boilie

Archie Horton
9lb 12oz common carp, Beechwood Park, Derby, bread



'CHEATING ALLEGATIONS' HIT MATCH FISHING, 1973

Angling Times
THE WORLD'S BEST SELLING ANGLING NEWSPAPER
No 1,019 Thursday, January 11, 1973 7p

Thames match shock

TWO THAMES anglers who sold dace at £1 a fish later saw a party of matchmen leaving a nearby venue where the top prize had been won with a dace catch weighing under 1 lb 8 oz (writes John Mitchell).

Wandsworth garage mechanic Colin Chipping, 28, and his friend Jimmy Brown, a 21-year-old dealer also of Wandsworth, told Angling Times that they were just packing up their tackle for the day on the Thames at Penton Hook when a man came along the bank and asked them how they had fared.

"We've got three dace in the net — they go over the pound" said the two anglers. The man went away and shortly returned with a plastic bag and offered Colin and Jimmy £1 for each fish.

"We thought he wanted them as livebait for pike as there are a few in the Thames at Penton Hook" said Colin. One of the fish fell in the river during the transfer but the man went away happy with two dace, he added.

"Later as we were carrying our tackle along the bank we saw the same man in a party of between 50 and 60 anglers — but he avoided us."

The anglers told Colin and Jimmy that they had just fished a match that had been won with just over a pound of fish.

"Walking along the bank after they had gone we put two and two together and we believe the match — probably a club fur and feather match but it could have been an open — was won with the aid of the fish we sold for £2," said Colin.

"We wouldn't have sold the fish had we known they would be used to cheat — it's just not fair," Colin told AT.

COALFISH RECORD TREMBLES

THE BRITISH coalfish record, barely a fortnight old, was only 12 oz from being equalled last week when Peter Dulley, chairman of Callington SAC, Cornwall, took a specimen of 27½ lb.

He was fishing off the Eddystone — the mark which produced the record — aboard the Plymouth boat 'Anjonica', skippered by Dave Elworthy.

Using a black artificial eel, Peter, a superintendent at an old peoples' home, also had a coalfish of 26½ lb.

On the same trip, Torquay tackle dealer Ted Tuckerman caught a pollack of 18 lb 12½ oz while his 16-year-old son Keith had a personal best pollack of 17 lb 12¼ oz. Artificial eel again did the trick.

● WHICH are this year's pace-setters in the Angling Times League? For all the positions see pages 24, 25.

the North-
Captor Jim
pped up his
s fishing in

ANOTHER SEVERN

BREAM
AMON
BR

ARTHUR'S ARCHIVE

Historian Keith recalls similar incidences of suspected foul play from days gone by

THIS 1973 archive reminded me of so many apocryphal tales that it set my mental cogs spinning. Whether the circumstances are exactly as told to an old match reporter pal of mine, the late John Mitchell, I don't know, but there are some old match fishing tricks and fiddles that come to mind.

There was a match organiser who regularly drew really good pegs – not always, but often enough to cause sideways glances. He never drew his own peg, so it seemed absolutely kosher, but he was sussed out by a very good friend of mine.

His *modus operandi* was to put an extra peg in the bag and hide the peg number he wanted to draw in his pocket.

When he was handed his drawn peg, he announced the number and put it in his pocket. My mate turned up late and took the last number in the bag, the flyer in which the organiser was tackling up!

A subsequent search of the organiser's pocket revealed a different number. That was the end of those matches!

The old days of Thames 'roving' matches often raised issues. One I recall very well was when my local stretch was running hard after a lot of rain, and the quiet water below the lock became an obvious choice. One very well-known angler managed to find a gap when a pleasure angler moved out of his way – always a dubious move.

To compound the felony, the angler in question's tackle became tangled with someone else's rig that resulted in a roach being netted and both anglers claiming it was on their hook. It ended up in the star's net and, at 12.5oz, won the match. Despite challenges, there was no actual proof.

That wasn't the case when one of the most highly-rated canal anglers of all time, famous for his gudgeon catches, was caught when a container in his basket sprang a leak and the angler behind noticed it dripping.

A challenge ensued and, following a search, a number of gudgeon were discovered.

The story goes that he was taking them from his garden pond, where he'd been studying their behaviour, to return them to the cut, and forgot they were there.

I never saw or heard of him on another match.

> **"A challenge ensued and, following a search, a number of gudgeon were discovered"**

WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING

CLASSIC COMEDY

Television sitcom Last of the Summer Wine begins its first-ever series, broadcast on BBC One. It proves a massive hit with viewers, and runs for 31 series, spanning 37 years.

SLOW DOWN!

In October the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) implemented an oil embargo against countries that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The UK is hit, along with Canada, the US, Japan and the Netherlands. As a petrol shortage looms, the speed limit on motorways is reduced to 50mph.

ALBUM FOR THE AGES...

One of rock music's landmark and best-selling albums, Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon, is released in the UK. It will go on to be one of the best-selling albums of all time, with total sales to date estimated at 50 million copies!

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LAST CAST WITH DOM

DOM GARNETT – ONE MAN DETERMINED TO KEEP THE PLEASURE IN ANGLING

My happy place – late May on the River Culm.

"There's nothing quite like a mayfly hatch in full swing"

FORGET Christmas or the summer holidays. As far as I'm concerned, now is the most wonderful time of the year.

Everything teems with life again... waters that seemed tired in March now sparkle. But best of all, we have the annual carnival of life, death and sex that is the mayfly hatch.

Blame the closed season or all-you-can-eat commercial fisheries if you like, but this annual spectacle seems criminally under-loved by many anglers.

Whether you like to swing a fly rod in anger or not, though, it is worth witnessing.

Living for just a single day, these large, instantly recognisable insects lead a thrillingly brief yet exciting existence. Imagine your wildest-ever night out, involving 10 bars and a freestyle brawl, and you're still not even close. Or at least, as far as you can remember, you didn't grow a pair of wings and mount a stranger while several of your mates got eaten!

In an era when a lot of river life is depressingly poor, these creatures seem a rare success story. That's partly because, unlike their smaller fly friends, they do well on silty rivers.

Don't rule out spring-fed lakes either, because several times I've seen sizeable carp and coarse fish gulping them down. This spring, I deliberately kept space free in the diary to enjoy peak-mayfly. The timing of this is never an exact science, but late May to early June tends to be best.

Catch it early and you might only see the odd giant, cream-to-pale-green fly coming off the water. Go too late and the trout might seem to be struggling with indigestion. When it's all building to a crescendo, however, it's the most magical time to be a fly angler. Gone are the doubts and tiny, fussy flies. In their place are splashy rises, while everything with a mouth or beak descends to feed.

I had a cracking afternoon of it on my local River Culm, whose silty, sandy banks were alive with activity. Meaty rises were everywhere. I can't really boast any genius in catching several fine trout, because as long as you tied on something big and pale yellow, they mugged it.

Catching trout suddenly becomes easy.

It was similarly exciting on two guided days that week, where my guests' jaws dropped at some of the action. What a time to catch your first trout! Not that the fish had all the fun. House martins and dippers were all over the river, and I even rescued a waterlogged lizard that had been taken by the current.

Like me, I assume the little chap had got a bit carried away by all those mayflies.

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Wilson's relative, Angling Times columnist Martin Bowler, also recalls several trips with John and how the pair inspired each other over four decades.

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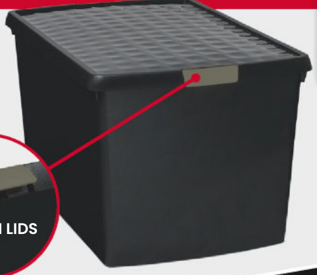

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